

THE INDYPENDENT

Issue #151, May 12 - June 1, 2010
A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE

People Power

Jed Brandt reports from inside Nepal's revolution. PAGE 10

PHOTO: JED BRANDT



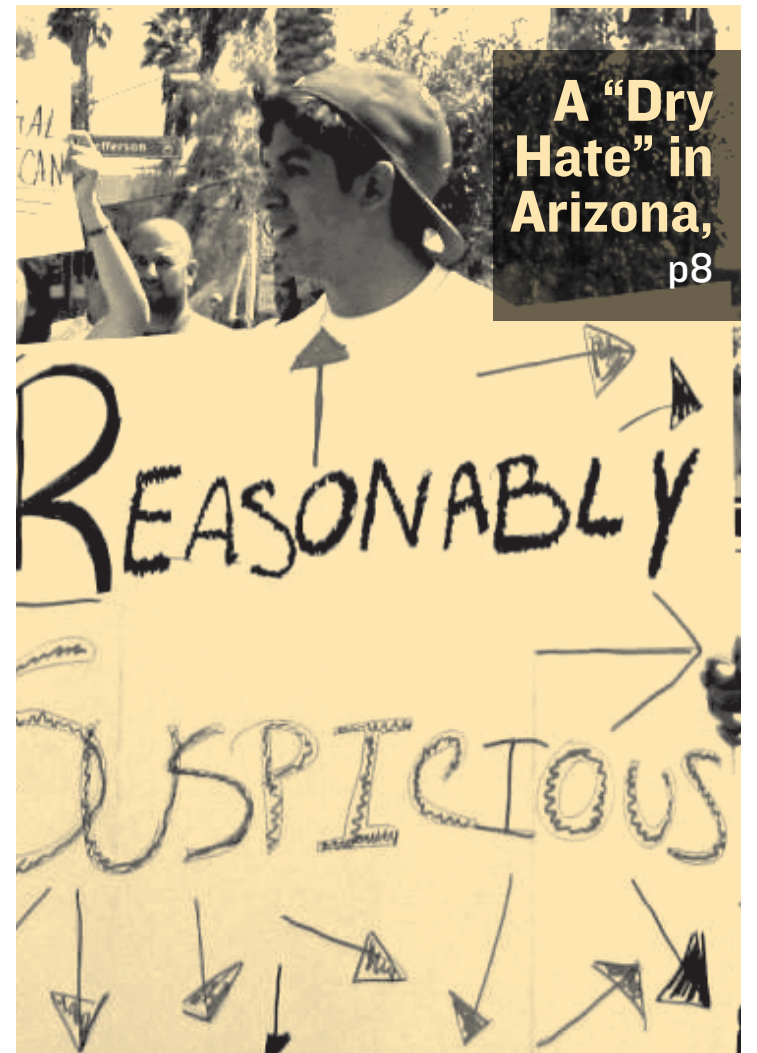
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The Independent is a New York-based free newspaper published 16 times a year on Wednesdays to our print and online readership of more than 200,000. It is produced by a network of volunteers who report, write, edit, draw, design, take photos, distribute, fundraise and provide website management. Since 2000, more than 650 citizen journalists, artists and media activists have participated in this project. Winner of more than 50 New York Community Media Alliance awards, *The Independent* is dedicated to empowering people to create a true alternative to the corporate press by encouraging people to produce their own media. The Independent is funded by subscriptions, reader donations, grants, merchandise sales, benefits and advertising. We accept submissions that look at news and culture through a critical lens, exploring how systems of power — economic, political and social — affect the lives of people locally and globally. The Independent reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity.

The Independent is affiliated with the New York City Independent Media Center, which is part of the global Indymedia movement, an international network that is dedicated to fostering grassroots media production, and to *IndyKids*, a children's newspaper. NYC IMC is an open publishing website where anyone can publish news (nyc.indymedia.org.)

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community calendar

PLEASE SEND EVENT ANNOUNCEMENTS TO INDYEVENTS@GMAIL.COM.

SAT MAY 15

1pm • Free

EVENT: AN AFTERNOON FOR PALESTINE. Join the Palestinian Right to Return Coalition on the 62nd anniversary of Al-Nakba, the Israeli occupation in Palestine. Spoken word artists Tahani Salah, Palestine Jeopardy and others will perform. Muslim American Society Youth Center 1933 Bath Ave, Bklyn 718-232-5905 • al-awdany.org

12-5pm • Free

FAIR: BROOKLYN PEACE FAIR. The sixth annual Brooklyn Peace Fair features performers, kids' activities, speakers and workshops dedicated to non-military solutions and global peace and justice. Brooklyn College Arts Lab and Student Center, 2900 Bedford Ave, Bklyn 718-624-5921 • brooklynpeace.org

SUN MAY 16

12-3pm • Free

EVENT: HOMES, NOT SHELTERS! DAY OF DIRECT ACTION. Celebrate Malcolm X's birthday with Picture the Homeless at Brook Park. There will be food and live music. This celebration aims to bring community awareness to the political disenfranchisement of the homeless. Brook Park, 141 St at Brook Ave, Bronx 646-314-6423 • picturethehomeless.org

8:30am (Registration) • Free

FUNDRAISER: AIDS WALK. Join other walkers in Central Park to raise money for various NYC-based AIDS organizations. Register online. 212-807-WALK(9255) • aidswalk.net

TUES MAY 18

5:30-7pm • Free

NEW VOLUNTEER MEETING. You are invited to stop by and learn more about how you can volunteer for *The Independent* and meet some of our editors, staff and volunteers. Open house from 5:30pm-6:15pm and new volunteer meeting at 6:15pm. 666 Broadway, Suite 500 • 212-904-1272 volunteer@indypendent.org

THU MAY 20

6:30-8:30pm • \$5-20 Sugg donation
PANEL AND CONVERSATION: FARM-WORKER'S RIGHTS AND PRESERVING SMALL FARMS. Panelists will discuss the Farmworkers Fair Labor Practices Act, which puts small farms in jeopardy. Draesel Hall (Church of the Holy Trinity),

316 E 88th St RSVP: 212-289-4100 • nycharities.org/events

FRI MAY 21

7pm • \$5 Sugg Donation

DISCUSSION: U.S. SOCIAL FORUM: ORGANIZING REGIONAL POWER. Join other local activists and interested strangers in organizing and sharing plans for the U.S. Social Forum in Detroit this June. Bluestockings Books, 172 Allen St 212-777-6028 • bluestockings.com

6:30pm • Free

DISCUSSION: WHO ARE THE PUERTO RICAN POLITICAL PRISONERS? Guest speaker Benjamin Ramos Rosado of Pro-Libertad Freedom Campaign will discuss the global Puerto Rican Independence Movement. Freedom Hall, 113 W 128th St 212-222-0633 • radicalwomen.org

MON MAY 22

11am-1pm • Free

BIKE TOUR: COMMUNITY GARDEN COMPOST DEMO. Meet the NYC Compost Project in Union Square to bike tour through five community garden Compost Demo sites in lower Manhattan. Register online. 17th St and Union Square East 212-477-4022 • lesecologycenter.org

SAT MAY 23

12 pm • Free

RALLY: BICYCLE FETISH DAY. Celebrate Bike Month with a block party that will include performers such as the Rude Mechanical Orchestra and fun contests that include your bike. The City Reliquary Museum, Havemeyer St (Btwn Grand St and Metropolitan Ave), Bklyn 718-782-4842 • cityreliquary.org

SAT MAY 23

12pm • Free

VOLUNTEER: CLEAN AND GREEN THE GOWANUS CANAL. Join the Gowanus Canal Conservancy and other volunteers for a day of wildflower-planting and trash picking along the canal in Brooklyn. Register online. Gowanus Canal, Bklyn • 718-541-4378 gowanuscandalconservancy.org

TUE JUNE 1

7pm-8pm • Free

READING: HIS OWN WHERE. Join writers Sapphire and Stacyann Chin and

MAY-JUNE



GritTV host Laura Flanders for a reading of June Jordan's posthumously released young adult novel, *His Own Where*. Sponsored by the Feminist Press. Strand Book Store, 828 Broadway 212-473-1452 • strandbooks.com

TUE JUNE 8

7:30pm • \$10-20 Sugg Donation
DEBATE: ARE SPORTS BORING? Political sports writer Dave Zirin will take on *Independent* writer and editor Arun Gupta for a lively debate. Cash bar. All proceeds to benefit The Independent. Brecht Forum, 451 West St (btwn Bank and Bethune Sts) • 212-904-1282 indypendent.org • brechtforum.org

THU JUNE 10-24

FILM: 2010 HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL. Thirty films from 25 countries will be screened including 28 New York premieres. Co-presented by The Film Society of Lincoln Center. See website for schedule and ticket prices. Walter Reade Theater, 165 W 65th St, upper level (btwn Broadway & Amsterdam Ave)

212-875-5600 • hrw.org/en/iff/new-york

THU JUNE 17-20

CONFERENCE: ALLIED MEDIA CONFERENCE. Every summer, activists from around the world are invited to gather in Detroit to organize, plan, inform and strategize for a just and creative world through the utilization of media. Buses being organized from NYC. Registration Fee: \$100-sliding scale McGregor Memorial Conference Center (Wayne State University), 495 Ferry Mall, Detroit, MI alliedmediaconference.org

TUE JUNE 22-26

CONFERENCE: U.S. SOCIAL FORUM. The U.S. Social Forum will provide the space for activists from across the globe to gather together to discuss, strategize and inform each other about various political projects aimed at improving our world. See website for more information. Buses being organized from NYC. Cobo Hall, 1 Washington Blvd, Detroit, MI ussf2010.org

READERS COMMENTS

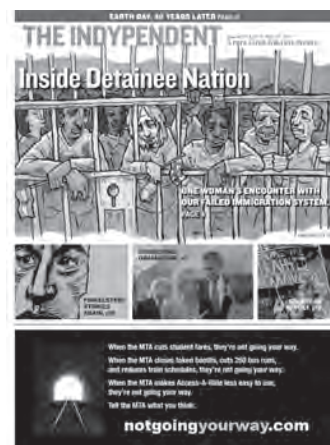
Post your own comments online at the end of each article or email letters@indypendent.org.

PRIVATIZED PRISONS ARE REAL THREAT

Response to "‘Everything Is Not Fine’: The Immigrant detention system is ruining the lives of innocent people," April 21:

Underlying the issue of detaining undocumented immigrants is the far more serious issue of privatized prisons. They are done for profit, not for public service. There is no accountability. I first visited prisoners at the CCA jail in Indianapolis, Indiana. When CCA first came to Indianapolis it was full of promises, such as making sure the staff was trained. However, we saw that deteriorate within a few months. Guards became lax

and careless. Visitor procedures were not maintained carefully, and when we visited monthly there were always new guards.



Government-run prisons run the gamut of criticism, but there are no positive words for privatized prisons. They're inherently evil and not what I want my tax dollars to support. —ANONYMOUS

'REFORM' FALLS SHORT

Response to "Obamacare: Now that Congress has acted, the struggle for universal, affordable, high-quality healthcare can finally begin," April 21:

A public option was not enough and will not be enough. But single payer advocates need to shift their emphasis. It is apparent that the opponents of healthcare reform are not moved by

tales of economic and physical heartbreak from the victims of the current health care system. Yet this "reform" threatens to produce an even more fragmented "patient delivery system" that will result in even more vulnerable populations. Employers need to be persuaded that they need to abandon the employer based model as a portal into the healthcare delivery system in favor of a more coherent and rational financing and patient delivery system. It is in their economic interests, their human capital interests, and ultimately in the interests of the U.S. economy.

—JIMMY1920

TRANSIT COALITION DEFENDS JOBS

BY JOHN GERBERG

Thousands of union workers and supporters attended a rally at Penn Station in Manhattan on May 4 to speak out against public transportation cuts.

The rally was organized by Keep America Moving, a nationwide coalition of labor, environmental and community groups advocating affordable and green mass transit. Member organizations include the Rainbow PUSH Coalition, the Working Families Party and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees.

"This campaign is a child of the financial crisis," said J.P. Patafio, the national

liver a symbolic pink slip to Jay Walder, the chairman and CEO of the MTA.

Participating organizations included the NYC Student Union, the Tri-State Transportation Campaign, Sierra Club and West Harlem-based WE ACT for Environmental Justice.

"Our interests in this are mutual," said NYC Student Union's Director of Political Action Lucas Johnson, who spoke at the rally. "Workers, students, environmentalists and the rest of the community — we can all agree that we need more funding for public transportation."

This kind of coalition effort, Patafio says, is especially important in the wake of service and workforce cuts by the

as 33 local and express bus lines.

On May 6, a Manhattan Supreme Court justice issued a temporary restraining order to stop the MTA from laying off 475 station agents, pending a hearing to ensure that the MTA had followed "proper procedure" in conducting the layoffs. However, as *The Independent* went to press, the MTA had already laid off 250 station agents who patrol platforms and do not work in station booths.

On the same day that the layoffs were postponed, the MTA also announced plans to fire another 1,000 transit workers, including cleaning crew and subway announcers.

John Samuelsen, president of TWU Local 100, says that a key aim of the coalition is to build union participation at a local, state and national level, which will then increase pressure on lawmakers to put transportation and labor issues at the top of their agenda.

Other initiatives for Keep America Moving include a series of town hall meetings throughout the country in early June, as well as pushing for emergency funding and working on legislation that would provide more federal support for public transportation.

Still, for station agents faced with the prospect of losing their jobs, emergency funding will come too late.

"What am I going to do? Start my life over at 35?" said Peggy Viaud, a station agent who has belonged to TWU Local 100 for the last four years.

Once she is laid off, Viaud, who attended the rally, plans to apply for food stamps and unemployment benefits for the first time.

"I had it all planned. I figured I'd pay off my car and buy a house in two years — live the American Dream," said Viaud, who lives in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, "Now the new American Dream is to have a job."



STANDING UP FOR TRANSIT: Members of the Transport Workers Union Local 100 and their allies rallied at New York's Penn Station on May 4 to denounce layoffs and service cuts and to support equitable funding for public transit. PHOTO: TWU LOCAL 100

coordinator of Keep America Moving. "Transit workers around the country are facing serious cutbacks in service and in rates. If we want to invest in the future, and the future is a green economy, then we need to invest in mass transit."

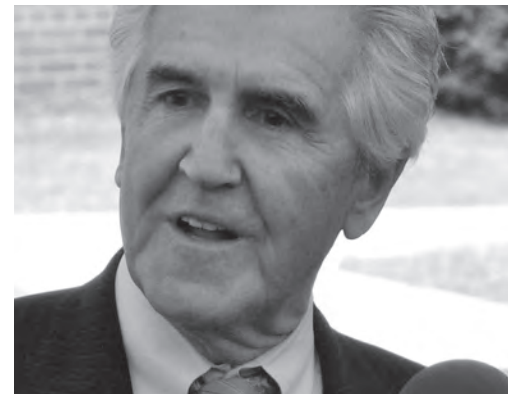
Demonstrators marched from Penn Station to the headquarters of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority on 44th Street and Madison Avenue to de-

MTA, which currently faces a budget shortfall of nearly \$800 million.

While the MTA has received \$1 billion in federal stimulus funding, 10 percent of which can be used for operational costs, the city has not used any of these funds to prevent the layoffs.

Recently proposed cutbacks include firing almost 500 station agents and eliminating the W and V trains, as well

BRUNO SENTENCED



BY STEVEN WISHNIA

Former State Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno, the prime villain behind the weakening of rent laws in 1997 and 2003, was sentenced to two years in prison May 6.

Bruno, 81, was convicted in December on two federal felony charges of depriving the public of "honest services." He had used contracts with his private consulting service as a way to collect bribes in exchange for government contracts and political favors.

Representing the Rensselaer-Saratoga area northeast of Albany, Bruno was majority leader from 1994 to 2008, when, with indictments looming, he resigned. During his tenure, he and the Senate Republicans received hundreds of thousands of dollars from real-estate interests.

Bruno gave those interests "honest services." In 1997, he blocked renewal of the state's rent-stabilization laws until Assembly Democrats accepted a deal that allowed massive rent increases on vacant apartments, no rent limits or tenant protections for apartments that rent for \$2,000 or more, and 20 percent increases for those with lower rents. In 2003, he had the Senate tighten the Urstadt law, which bars New York City from enacting rent regulations stricter than the state's. Coupled with weak enforcement of illegal overcharges, these changes sent rents skyrocketing and encouraged rampant speculation and harassment of tenants.

Bruno will not begin serving his sentence until after the U.S. Supreme Court rules on the constitutionality of the "honest services" law. That decision is expected in June.

At his sentencing, Bruno begged for probation. "In my heart and in my mind I did nothing wrong. Nothing!" he told the judge.

"The problem with probation is that it doesn't send a message to the public that your criminal conduct here is serious," U.S. District Court Judge Gary L. Sharpe responded.

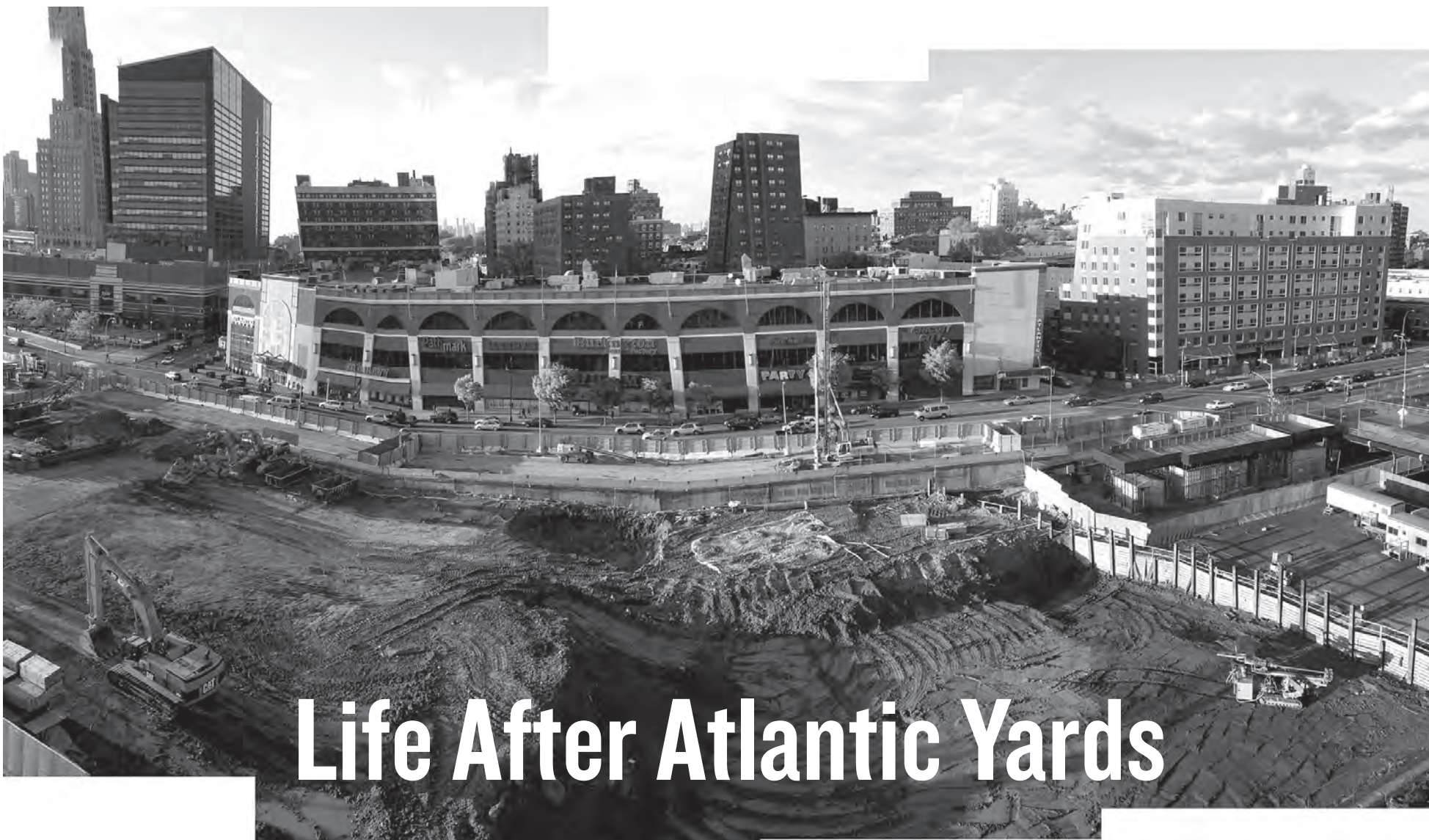
HITTING THE STREETS ON MAY DAY



WORKERS' RIGHTS: Tens of thousands of New Yorkers attended demonstrations throughout the city on May 1, celebrating International Workers Day.

WALK THE WALK: Members of Make the Road New York, a social justice organization, marched across the Brooklyn Bridge as part of their May Day actions.

PHOTOS: THOMAS MARCZEWSKI



Life After Atlantic Yards

Brooklyn's Daniel Goldstein led the fight against the Atlantic Yards mega-project for years. Days before moving out of his home, he spoke with *The Independent* about why he fought so long and what he learned.

INTERVIEW BY JOHN TARLETON
IMAGES BY AMELIA KRALES

Dozens of cardboard packing boxes were carefully stacked and labeled throughout Daniel Goldstein's home and in the adjacent hallway. In May 2003, when he purchased the three-bedroom apartment in a converted warehouse at 636 Pacific Street, he hadn't envisioned being on the verge of moving after being at the center of a six-and-a-half-year political and legal battle between two very different visions of Brooklyn's future.

"It's a great place to be and a place I intended to be for a long time," Goldstein recalled.

Goldstein had hoped to put down roots in Prospect Heights, then an increasingly vibrant low-rise neighborhood near where Flatbush and Atlantic Avenues converge and within walking distance of Boerum Hill, Clinton Hill, Park Slope and Fort Greene. Instead, Bruce Ratner moved into the neighborhood too, and in a big way.

The billionaire developer whose giant Forest City Ratner real estate firm bears his name, announced his plan to purchase the New Jersey Nets basketball team and move it to Brooklyn. With the support of powerful political allies, Ratner was promised 22 acres of prime real estate around the Atlantic Yards rail terminal (including the block on which Goldstein lives) to build a basketball arena and 16 luxury condominium towers, a \$4.9 billion dollar project that would eventually receive almost \$2 billion in direct and indirect government subsidies.

Ratner's allies hailed the project as a jobs and affordable housing panacea. A small army of opponents, including Goldstein, cried foul, saying the project was a billion-dollar boondoggle that would wreck several Brooklyn neighborhoods while failing to deliver its promised benefits. And they did more than that. They got organized in a major way, forming a tenacious organization called Develop, Don't Destroy Brooklyn, which battled Ratner and his cronies in the courts

of law and public opinion for years.

Goldstein emerged as the leader of the group, through which he met his wife Shabnam Merchant, who was also organizing against Ratner's mega-project. The last property owner holding out against the project, Goldstein folded in April, taking a \$3 million settlement from Ratner after all his legal options were finally exhausted. Days before he and his family were slated to move out of their home, Goldstein took a break from the chaos of packing to speak with *The Independent* about why he had stuck it out so long, the wisdom of fighting City Hall and what he might pursue next, including a possible future in politics.

JOHN TARLETON: *So six years later, after all these battles, what would you say you've learned from the whole experience?*

DANIEL GOLDSTEIN: I've certainly learned a lot about how New York City and state politics work and don't work. I learned that no matter how uphill a fight is, if it's a worthwhile fight, and I certainly think this one was, individuals and communities need to fight. And I think that the community that fought Atlantic Yards waged an incredible fight and I think in many ways they've won.

JT: *Because?*

DG: They exposed a project that was sold as a done-deal, that was a fixed deal and they exposed every single bit of it as being, in my view, illegitimate and corrupt. People think corruption has to equate to illegal and it doesn't have to equate to illegal, it just has to equate to fixed deals, which are legal, which means the laws need to be changed and reformed.

JT: *What will be the long-term impact of the fight over the Atlantic Yards project on other projects like it in the city?*

DG: There's been some impact as far as the Columbia [University] expansion and the victory that property owners there had in court over eminent domain. I think many community organizations will learn from the fight we

waged. If there is an attempt to ram a project like this down the throat of a community again, it will be fought in a similar fashion.

JT: *What was it you felt like you were fighting for here?*

DG: The fundamental issue was the process and the lack of it, and the fact that the largest project proposed in Brooklyn's history, with a large amount of subsidies and eminent domain and a sweetheart rail yard deal, never went through any vote by any elected official. What the project itself is, in terms of its scale and its eventual impact on adjacent neighborhoods, is the symptom of that fundamental sickness in which the government colluded with the developer to let the developer drive everything.

JT: *What is special about Prospect Heights? What is being lost?*

DG: It feels genuine, it feels real. It doesn't feel like it was something that was concocted. It's a great neighborhood and it is adjacent to other great neighborhoods, so it's a very walkable place.

JT: *Why did you make the deal with Ratner?*

DG: On March 1, I became a tenant of New York State after the state took ownership of my apartment, from which it was preparing to evict me. Had I gone all the way to being evicted, I would have had to leave my home and then go back to court just to get *maybe* fair-market value for my home. Whether or not I accepted a settlement, it would not have impacted the fight against the project.

There was a four-hour back-and-forth separately between attorneys on each side and the sticking point wasn't money, it was they wanted a complete gag order on me that I refused to accept. If I had, I wouldn't be talking to you now or say anything ever again about the project. It was gut-wrenching. I wish it had never come to that. I would give back all of the settlement money if none of this had ever happened, if the neighborhood could be restored and grow in the way that it had been growing.

JT: *What's the future of Develop, Don't Destroy Brooklyn?*

DG: I think it will be around in one form or another and I think many community groups and individuals are going to keep a very close eye on what goes on with Atlantic Yards. Forest City Ratner claims they're building 2,250 units of so-called affordable housing over 10 years, and we and other groups have said that is just not going to happen. The State's agreement with Ratner is to allow a minimum of 25 years to build the whole project. So there's gonna be conflict and controversy at this site for 25 to 30 or even more years. I think there's always going to be resistance to it. But the reality is this arena is very likely to be built.

JT: *How do you respond to the people who say you're a spoiler, you thwarted new jobs, affordable housing and even the renaissance of Brooklyn with the return of a big-league sports team?*

DG: Ratner is taking advantage of Brooklyn's renaissance; he's not bringing it on. This has nothing to do with the Dodgers leaving or some hole in the heart of Brooklyn. Brooklyn got over the Dodgers quite a long time ago. The project, for Ratner, is about building condos and market-rate rentals. And the way he enabled himself to do it was to get a team, build an arena, get ACORN on his side and get the most powerful politicians on his side because of the sports and the housing claims and the job claims. But they're all illusory. Ratner tried to impose a vision, and he should have understood there was going to be a lot of resistance to a vision such as this one without any political process.

JT: *What do you see as your future?*

DG: Once I have a chance to figure out where I'm living, there's a lot of things I want to do, but I haven't decided on them

yet. I've had an invitation to help the folks in Willets Point (Queens) defeat the mayor's plan to take their properties, their businesses. I think I have developed a lot of skills that I can use toward social justice, activism and politics. Politics is a pretty seedy business in this state and I'm not sure it's actually where I want to be, but I have a feeling it will be where I end up.

JT: *Any thoughts of wanting to run for office?*

DG: It's something I never would have thought of before this whole thing and now it's something I could imagine. [But] if I ever do run for office, I'm not sure how long I'd last because it's a game that I find difficult to play and I wouldn't want to play the typical political game. It's hard to win in this city when you do it that way, and it's hard to beat incumbents anywhere, especially here. So we'll see.

I've considered getting a law degree also. I've gained a knowledge of what lawyers do through this and a respect for some lawyers. I've got to figure it out. I really have spent very little time thinking about the future over these years, I've been pretty absorbed in all this.

JT: *If somebody came up to you and asked if it is really worth it to fight City Hall, what would you say to them?*

DG: Absolutely. I think it's worth it. Everyone should fight City Hall when they think there is an abuse of power. There's a lot to resist and fight against and expose and try to reform certainly when it comes to eminent domain and how development proceeds in the city.



HOLE IN THE GROUND: (Opposite) The future home of the New Jersey Nets basketball team as seen from Daniel Goldstein's roof. (Top) Goldstein and his family were the last residents on this stretch of Pacific Street. (Bottom) Goldstein's parting prediction: There's going to be conflict at this site for 25 to 30 or even more years. PHOTOS: AMELIA KRALES

THE ROGUE COMEDY SHOW




www.TheRogueCandidate.com

A fundraiser for the production of the film 'The Rogue Candidate: Sarah Palin's REAL Alaska'

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Lee Camp, John Knefel
Negin Farsad & special guest
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From NYC To Namibia, Public Education Is Under Attack by Free-Market Ideologues



THINK GLOBALLY, PRIVATIZE LOCALLY

BY LOIS WEINER

New York City's public-school system has endured repeated budget cuts in recent years. And now the state Assembly is considering a \$492 million "compromise" cut in school funding for the city in the coming year, while Mayor Michael Bloomberg is threatening to lay off 6,400 teachers.

The media discuss school budgets in terms of these big numbers, but rarely in terms of their effects on the city's 1.1 million schoolchildren, precisely because it's hard to imagine what large, abstract numbers mean in the real world of schools. We are not told how these cuts wreck worthwhile programs, demoralizing teachers and school professionals who have spent years fine-tuning them. We don't hear from kids about their disappointments and frustrations about losing classes, programs and teachers that make school worthwhile.

The city's Department of Education does not evaluate the damage done by the cuts — any of them. Yet, the cuts last year were so harmful that many principals spoke out, risking their jobs. The cuts this year will hurt even more, even if the state Legislature reduces the amount that's cleaved.

So, how can people who are charged with protecting our public schools, such as Mayor Bloomberg and Schools Chancellor Joel Klein, who say that they care about kids and that school reform is the main social-justice issue of our time, carry out policies that injure the kids they say they want to protect?

The answers to these questions require looking beyond Bloomberg and Klein's professed beliefs and intentions to the policies themselves, which form a coherent package which has been implemented in countries across much of the world during the past 30 years.

NEOLIBERAL REFORMS

Known outside the United States as neoliberalism's project in education, this package of "market-friendly" reforms includes privatization of schools and services; charter schools, public-school closings, fragmentation of the school system's administrative apparatus; budget cuts, high-stakes standardized testing and the destruction of the teacher unions as a significant player in education. Given the state

of the financial system, it's ironic that the economic crisis has accelerated and intensified efforts in the United States to push this package of reforms.

In developing countries, the architects of these reforms are quite explicit that they aim to make education produce workers who are minimally educated and will compete for jobs that require no more than a seventh or eighth grade education. This new educational system will better serve transnational corporations and their quest for increased profits. A small number of workers will require the ability to think and be the new leaders of finance, industry and technology. They'll receive a high-quality education, in expensive private schools or in privately-run public schools — that is, charter schools.

But in neoliberalism's educational plan,

ment of the reforms, so they too must be eliminated, or at least housebroken enough.

When I speak to audiences of teachers and teacher unionists about my research about this package of reforms, already implemented by the World Bank in Africa, Asia and South America, invariably someone argues that I'm portraying a conspiracy. Not at all. A conspiracy is secret. This project is quite public, if you look for information about it in the right places. One place you would have found these reforms touted a decade ago was on Wall Street. A Merrill Lynch report issued in April 1999 titled "Investing in the Growing Education and Training Industry" informed potential investors that "A new mindset is necessary, one that views families as customers, schools as 'retail outlets' where educational services are received, and the school board as a customer-

"A new mindset is necessary, one that views families as customers, schools as 'retail outlets,' where educational services are received, and the school board as a customer service department that hears and addresses parental concerns."

—Merrill Lynch Report, April 9, 1999

most workers do not need much schooling, so they do not require teachers who are well-educated. In fact, teachers with lots of formal education and experience are a problem because they will ask for higher wages, which is a waste of government money. Teachers for most kids need only be "good enough," to follow scripted materials that prepare students for standardized tests, and these teachers can be put into schools through "fast track" programs, like Teach For America.

ENDING PUBLIC OWNERSHIP

The other key element of this package is privatizing and commercializing schools. Education is the last sector of the economy that is still mainly "owned" by the public, and this "monopoly" as it's called by the architects of this reform package, has to be broken so that for-profit companies have access to the education "market." Education is also the last sector of the economy that is heavily unionized, and the teacher unions can be a stubborn oppo-

service department that hears and addresses parental concerns."

You won't find the neoliberal project explained in *The New York Times* or the *Daily News* or even MSNBC or CNN. But if you look in reports of the World Bank and research done by independent scholars, you'll see that the programs Klein has implemented were previously forced on many other countries. The result has been sharply increased inequality in education and the creation of two separate and unequal school systems, one for the rich and privileged and another for everybody else.

We can see our future — if we fail to stop these initiatives — in what's occurred throughout the developing world. John Nyambe, chief education officer of the National Institute for Educational Development in Namibia, observes that the fate of his country's educational system now lies outside its people's control and that government bodies have little control. Instead, control is in the hands of inter-

national bodies that are "driven and propelled by the insatiable demand for profit. In policy formulation, profit, instead of public welfare, occupies the center stage."

In the United States, we see control migrating to an alliance of billionaire philanthropists that even conservative education writer Diane Ravitch refers to as the "billionaire boys club," as well as to transnational corporations and the think tanks and foundations they fund.

THINKING GLOBALLY

How can we stop this juggernaut? The fuller answer goes beyond this article. But the big lesson I've learned in my research is that we must remove the blinders that keep us from seeing beyond New York's borders. The project is the same, with a few twists, in almost every country in the world. We have much to learn from struggles elsewhere, including outside the United States. In Great Britain, charter schools (called "academies") have been halted by an alliance of parents, teachers and students begun by activists in the National Union of Teachers. The questions they asked candidates in their recent elections are exactly what we should ask politicians who profess to support public education:

*Do you agree that public schools should be accountable to democratically elected representatives of the communities they serve and not to unaccountable private sponsors or providers?

*Do you agree that public funding of our schools should all be spent on educating our children rather than contributing to the profits of private educational providers like Green Dot, paid to provide "outsourced" services to public schools?

*If elected as our representative, do you promise that you will vote against any proposal to allow so-called "alternative" or charter schools to be run for a profit?

The project to destroy what is best in public education is global, and so must be our response. In a future article in *The Independent*, I'll discuss the role of teacher unions and parents in these struggles.

Lois Weiner teaches education at New Jersey City University. She is the co-editor with Mary Compton of The Global Assault on Teaching, Teachers, and Their Unions: Stories for Resistance.

Baseball Strikes Out in Arizona



K-K-K: Will the Yankee star Mariano Rivera, who was born in Panama, make it to the mound next time he pitches in Arizona? The state's new anti-immigration law allows local police to detain anyone suspected of being an undocumented immigrant. Latino communities are outraged, saying that the law allows for racial profiling.

BY DAVE ZIRIN

If you are upset with Arizona's immigrant laws, please don't take it out on Major League Baseball! Sports and politics do not mix!"

With a near military discipline, this had been the message pushed by much of the sports media in conjunction with the Arizona Republican Party. The aim has been to head off any notion of boycotting the Arizona Diamondbacks or calling for the 2011 All Star game to be removed from the team's home at Chase Field in Phoenix. Arizona Gov. Jan Brewer was given a page on *Espn.com* to say that boycott campaigns aimed at sports are "inappropriate and misguided." Diamondbacks executive Derrek Hall parroted the governor, calling protesters "misguided" because "the organization doesn't take political positions."

Team owner and Republican Party bankroller Ken Kendrick was shaken enough to release a statement saying that he personally "opposes" the bill.

There is one problem with this public relations fusillade: it's based on a fundamental lie. Ken Kendrick is showing through his actions that he not only supports this bill, he is using his position as Diamondback team owner to do it.

On May 20, *The Nation* learned, Ken Kendrick is holding a private fundraiser inside his owner's box at Chase Field for SB 1070 supporter State Sen. Jonathan Paton. The fundrais-

er will take place during the D-backs' game against the San Francisco Giants. Paton is attempting to make the leap from the statehouse to the U.S. Congress, and he is depending on Kendrick's deep pockets to make it happen.

Leave aside for a moment the ethical and perhaps legal ramifications of Ken Kendrick using a stadium built with \$250 million in public dollars to raise money for his pet candidates. The fact is that while Kendrick publicly distances himself from the bill, he is using the home of the supposedly "apolitical" Diamondbacks organization as a fundraising center for SB 1070 supporting politicians.

Favianna Rodriguez, co-founder of *Presente.org*, which helped start the All Star Game boycott campaign *MoveTheGame.org*, said to me, "Latinos and their allies across the country are targeting Major League Baseball to show that laws like SB 1070 will have dire economic consequences. Mr. Kendrick's continued support of the politicians behind SB 1070 will only further inspire that movement."

Dave Zirin writes for The Nation and is the author of the forthcoming Bad Sports: How Owners are Ruining the Games We Love and A People's History of Sports in the United States. You can read more at edgeofsports.com. This article was excerpted from a longer version published May 10 at thenation.com. Zirin will be speaking June 8 at the Brecht Forum (see ad below).



Spill, Baby, Spill

BY JESSICA LEE

As oil continues to spew into the Gulf of Mexico, New York residents worry that a disaster of similar magnitude could happen closer to home.

"The oil and gas industry has increasingly exhausted the easy-to-get-to reservoirs," said Robert Jereski, a New York City environmental activist with the group Safe Water Movement. "This means that most new drilling sites involve much more environmentally dangerous, energy-intensive processes."

Jereski is just one of the thousands who oppose permitting energy companies to drill for natural gas in deep shale formations in New York using the controversial hydraulic fracturing practice ("hydrofracking"), which uses water, sand and a proprietary cocktail of chemicals under high pressure to crack shale formations to release the gas. Environmentalists continue to organize for a statewide ban on this type of natural gas extraction despite a few recent small victories.

On April 23, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) announced stricter permitting requirements for shale natural gas drilling in the watersheds of Syracuse and New York City. While the extra requirements could result in no new drilling in the Catskills and Skaneateles Lake watersheds, environmentalists and local politicians feel the entire state should be protected.

"A complete ban on watershed drilling was the right thing a year ago, it's the right thing today," said Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer in an April 24 press release.

"We're going to fight them tooth and nail," Jereski said, "We'll make an example of any politician or corporate environmental organization who would betray our upstate allies by supporting special protected status for the water downstate, playing into their divide and conquer strategy."

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency pledged in March to conduct a \$1.9 million two-year nationwide study to evaluate the risks to drinking water supplies posed by the hydrofracking extraction process. The Marcellus shale formation, which extends down to 7,000 feet below ground from New York to Tennessee, is believed to be the world's largest natural gas reserve. A long list of accidents, explosions, water and air pollution and health complaints have been documented in eight other states where shale fracking is ongoing.

Energy companies are itching to get access to New York reserves. "We have shifted our focus to our next important project, the Marcellus Shale prospect in New York," said Zoran Arandjelovic, a top executive at Epsilon Energy Ltd., in a May 10 press release about the company's second quarter earnings. "We are ready to ramp up our operations in New York when the moratorium on conducting hydraulic fracturing for the extraction of natural gas is lifted."

Environmentalists are supporting two bills in the New York State Assembly. A. 10490 would impose a ban on hydraulic fracturing until 120 days after the findings of the EPA study is released. A. 10633 would give towns the authority to pass local ordinances to regulate gas drilling.

More than 2,800 people have signed an online petition organized by Catskill Mountainkeeper to encourage the DEC to hold off issuing its Final Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement on the Oil, Gas and Solution Mining Regulatory Program until the EPA study is complete. The DEC aims to streamline the environmental review process for new drilling permits.

DAVE ZIRIN,
sports columnist for *The Nation* magazine and
author of *A People's History of Sports in the United States*
defends sports.

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ARUN GUPTA,
a founding editor of *The Indypendent*,
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Arizona Heats National Immigration Debate

By RANDALL AMSTER

If you're reading this from outside Arizona, you may be wondering what the heck is going on here. The political process in the desert has gone completely haywire, resulting in the adoption of openly racist laws, dehumanizing police practices and legalized harassment of marginalized groups, all in the name of deterring undocumented immigration. The most recent outrage is the passage of SB 1070, but its roots lie deep in our past.

It's important to look at Arizona's history to explain what's happening here today. During the Civil War, the Confederate States annexed

minority-dominated districts to challenge the right of African-Americans and Latinos to vote." (In fact, investigative journalist Greg Palast recently speculated that SB 1070 is just an elaborate ploy to tamp down Democratic-leaning minority voters "because the vast majority of perfectly legal voters and residents who lack ID sufficient for [the law] are citizens of color, citizens of poverty.") Arizona Sen. Barry Goldwater, the Republican Presidential candidate in 1964, was one of the few non-Southern senators to oppose the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Arizona was one of the last states to recognize the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday. In 1990, voters rejected a referendum to adopt the holiday, and as one consequence, the National Football League reversed its decision to hold the Super Bowl in Arizona.

Voters finally approved MLK Day in 1992 as a result of widespread political and economic pressure.

This highly racialized history has provided fertile ground for numerous hate groups to stake claims here. The most notable include the white supremacist Devil Dogs, active militias openly aligned with neo-Nazism, and the Minutemen vigilantes who took up arms several years ago to patrol the U.S.-Mexico border. Right-wing interests have dominated the state's governance, although in recent years a more centrist strain has been developing, prompting a reactionary resurgence. Longtime Republican Sen. John McCain is battling a re-election challenge from the right by former state congressman J.D. Hayworth, perhaps



est immigration law, essentially creating a new class of "status crimes" for failure to carry immigration documents. The police are empowered to detain individuals suspected of being in the country illegally, which has opened the door wide for racial profiling.

The bill's chief sponsor, Republican State Sen. Russell Pearce, pushed for this law for years, but was deterred by the veto power of former Democratic Gov. Janet Napolitano. When she was tapped to head the federal Department of Homeland Security, she was replaced by Republican Secretary of State Jan Brewer. As Democratic State Rep. Kyrsten Sinema recently told me, "Up to now, we've been successful in stopping him, [but] folks like Mr. Pearce and his extremist allies around the country have been working toward this for years."

OUTRAGED: (left and top) Thousands of people demonstrated against Arizona's new anti-immigration law (SB 1070) in Phoenix May 1. A growing national movement aims to pressure lawmakers to rescind the law, using rallies, lobbying, civil disobedience and economic boycotts. PHOTOS: ARIZONA INDYMEDIA CENTER

signs suggesting that this crisis can become an opportunity for more effective organizing and enhanced solidarity.

Northern Arizona University professor Luis Fernandez, who works closely with migrant communities, told me, "For years now, the migrant community in Arizona has been suffering quietly, living in fear of an ever more punitive environment. The anti-immigration, nativist and white-supremacist sentiments in Arizona culminated with the passing of SB 1070."

"The passage of this draconian law had some unintended consequences, namely that it has resulted in the migrant population losing its fear and forcing them to come out against this law," Fernandez said. "All over Arizona we now have an emboldened group of people who have nothing to lose but their chains. For the first time in a long time, I am hopeful after witnessing the power of the undocumented population: People are speaking out, voicing their dissent, and seeking justice."

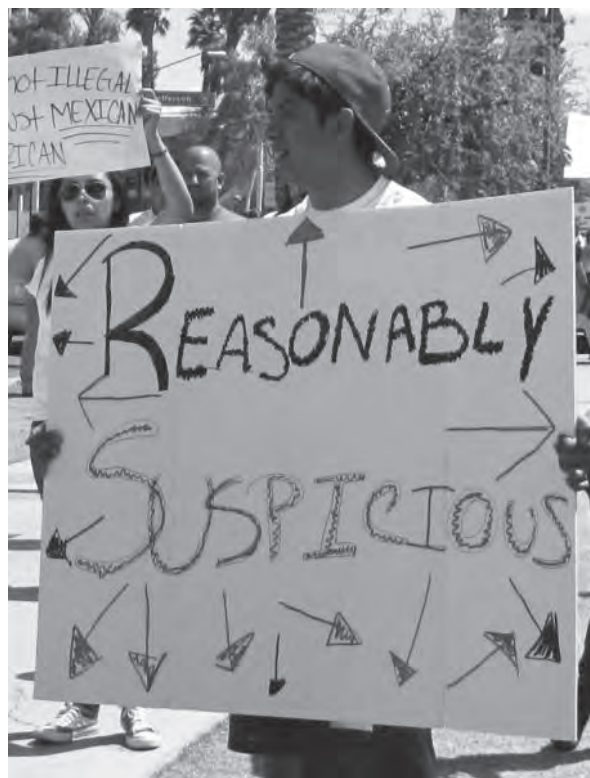
On some level, the appearance of SB 1070 in the national dialogue finally makes plain what many of us here have been experiencing for years. Now that the nativists' motivations and machinations are out in the open, people have shed their fear, as allies from around the country and world have communicated their opposition to the law and demanded an overhaul of the nation's immigration laws.

Talk of boycotts, more demonstrations, massive civil disobedience and open subversion of the law is coming from many corners. Tucson police officer Martin Escobar and Phoenix officer David Salgado — both Mexican-American — recently filed separate lawsuits alleging that the law will impede police work.

In early May, city councils in Tucson voted 5-1 and Flagstaff voted unanimously to sue the state to overturn SB 1070 and block its implementation. The Faculty Senate at Northern Arizona University overwhelmingly approved a resolution condemning it as "racist." And the beloved Phoenix Suns basketball team even donned "Los Suns" jerseys on Cinco de Mayo in a show of solidarity.

These remain very contentious and disturbing times here in Arizona, which in many ways befits the national mood. They often say it's a "dry heat" in the Southwest. Yet with summer not even upon us, it's already reaching the boiling point.

Randall Amster teaches peace studies at Prescott College and serves as the executive director of the Peace and Justice Studies Association. His most recent books include Lost in Space: The Criminalization, Globalization, and Urban Ecology of Homelessness and the co-edited volume Building Cultures of Peace: Transdisciplinary Voices of Hope and Action.



While the Arizona law has been heavily criticized across the country, a CBS News/New York Times poll released May 3 found that the country could be evenly split on the issue. When asked about the new immigration law:

51% said the law is "about right."

9% said the law "doesn't go far enough."

36% said the law "goes too far."

this southwest land and declared it a Confederate Territory. In 1861, 50 years before statehood, the "people of Arizona" passed a resolution declaring that "we cordially indorse [sic] the course pursued by the seceded Southern States." Arizona remained part of the Confederacy until the conclusion of the war in 1865 (the only Western territory to do so) and still commemorates its official date of statehood (granted in 1912) as Feb. 14, the anniversary of Jefferson Davis' establishment of the Confederate territory of Arizona.

In the early days of statehood, which coincided with a spike in Mexican immigration, a streak of racism in the state led to pervasive stereotyping and scapegoating. When the Great Depression hit in the 1930s, Mexicans found themselves harassed and censured. The national prohibition of marijuana in 1937 was bound up with the image of "the Mexican" as "a thief, an untamed savage, hot-blooded, quick to anger yet inherently lazy and irresponsible," as cannabis historian Ernest L. Abel put it.

During the civil-rights movement, there were repeated allegations that prominent Arizona Republicans, such as former Supreme Court Chief Justice William Rehnquist, orchestrated "ballot security" actions that, as observed on *Democracy Now!*, "swept through polling places in mi-

best known for his narrow conservatism and losing his seat in the Abramoff lobbying scandal.

In the last decade, Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio has anointed himself "America's Toughest Sheriff" through his treatment of undocumented immigrants in Maricopa County jails by using practices associated with racism such as chain gangs. Arpaio's incendiary tactics have been widely criticized. Using powers authorized through the federal 287(g) program, which delegates some immigration enforcement to state and local police, he conducts massive immigration raids, fostering a reign of terror that has prompted an ongoing U.S. Department of Justice investigation. After the U.S. Department of Homeland Security revoked his authority to conduct 287(g) arrests in October 2009, Arpaio insisted that "they can't stop me," vowing to have undocumented immigrants driven to the border if the federal government did not take custody of them.

All these episodes past and present have contributed to an environment in which the anti-immigrant SB 1070 was signed into law April 23. The fearmongering that dominates state politics provides a constant source of wedge issues and demonizing mechanisms to activate the right. Arizona now has the nation's harsh-

BANKER HATERS: What our anger reveals about us

BY GRAHAM PARSONS

Everyone is down on Goldman Sachs. The recent *New York Post* headline said it all: “Sachs of Sh*%!”

As a teacher of business ethics, I am most curious about the reasons for our anger and what they say about our visions of a just economy. Ultimately, I see our anger as an expression of what Americans are not typically thought to embrace: collectivism. Here’s why.

There are roughly two, very different, sorts of concerns with Goldman’s actions. One is a thin concern and the other a thick one.

The thin view is expressed in the single-minded focus on whether Goldman committed fraud. The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has charged that it did when it created and sold a collateralized debt obligation specifically designed to lose value. Goldman then bet that the investors would lose and, when they did, Goldman cashed in.

Clearly, Goldman withheld relevant information from its investors. But was there fraud here? Maybe not. Goldman CEO Lloyd Blankfein defended his company’s behavior before a congressional committee the other day, arguing that it gave its investors exactly what they were looking for. He said, in effect, that Goldman employees never said anything objectively false to investors about the product they were selling. All they did was fail to tell investors the company’s opinion of the investment-worthiness of its products. If true, that’s not fraud. It’s morally equivalent to a car salesperson who fails to point out that a car is a lemon. This may be sleazy, but it’s not fraudulent. The investors, just like the buyer of the lemon, were gullible, and Goldman played them for all they were worth.

If our only concern is whether Goldman committed fraud, then we are implicitly accepting the thin view of Goldman’s duties. I call it the thin view because it is grounded in an individualist vision of economic jus-

tice. In this picture, the economy is simply an arena where individuals battle for possession of private spoils. There is no social purpose to the economy; all that matters is whether individuals obtain their spoils fairly. And here “fairly” just means without defrauding, threatening, or robbing anyone. For the thin view, so long as you don’t do these things, anything goes.

So what if it turned out that Goldman did not commit fraud? Would we be ready to forgive them? I’m confident we would not.

This means that most people don’t accept the thin view and its vision of the just economy as simply an individualistic capitalist battlefield.

In fact, most people are mad at Goldman for reasons other than the appearance of fraud. *The New York Times* got it right when it recently wrote that people are angry at Goldman because it profited while the rest of the economy suffered. Indeed, it appears that in many ways Goldman profited *because* the economy suffered. This is exactly what the company did in the deal that drew the SEC’s attention. It sold garbage that threatened not only investors but the global economy, and it did so for the express purpose of cashing in on the destruction.

Now, why would this make us mad? I’m sure bankers would insist that we’re just jealous. Because we are getting poorer while they are getting richer, we resent their success.

That would be convenient for them if it were true, but I think there is much more behind our anger than envy. Indeed, I think our disapproval reveals a commitment to a very old, sophisticated and powerful vision of economic justice.

The fact that we are mad that Goldman and other bankers have gotten rich while we have gotten poorer tells us that we implicitly believe that banks should get rich only when we do too. The bankers and we should share one economic fate.

This brings us to the thick view. The reason we think our interest should dovetail with the bankers’ is because we implicitly ac-

cept two basic principles of economic justice. First, the economy should be treated as a cooperative endeavor where we all contribute to each other’s lives. The economy ultimately belongs to all of us and should be structured to best serve the common good. The economy has a clear social purpose and we expect every participant to serve that purpose. That Wall Street is treating the economy as an individualistic battlefield is therefore precisely what people object to. We think bankers should not prey on the rest of us, but, on the contrary, should contribute to our well-being.

The second principle is that people should only be allowed to use the economy to their private advantage when doing so serves the common good. Because the economy belongs to us, we reserve the right to structure the economy in whatever way we think will best serve the common good. We give individuals permission to engage in for-profit activities; it is not their right. We have allowed bankers to make private profits only because we thought it would be best for us if they did. This is why we are so pissed that they are profiting by harming us. They are not serving their social purpose.

It might be surprising to some that the thick view is still a part of our moral sensibility. Once it is revealed, some might even wonder whether they should give up on it as some sort of anachronism. They should not. The thick view is an appropriate way of looking at the economy and it is the only view that will ground a struggle to take back control of it.

We should be unafraid of thinking of the economy as ours, as something to be used for our sake as a people. Then, we should ask bankers (and insurance companies, landlords, private schools and any for-profit industry), “What good does it do us to allow you to profit from what you do?” If it cannot be shown that it does us good, then permission to make profit should be revoked. These activities should be regulated or socialized, whichever serves us best.

Graham Parsons teaches philosophy at Brooklyn College.



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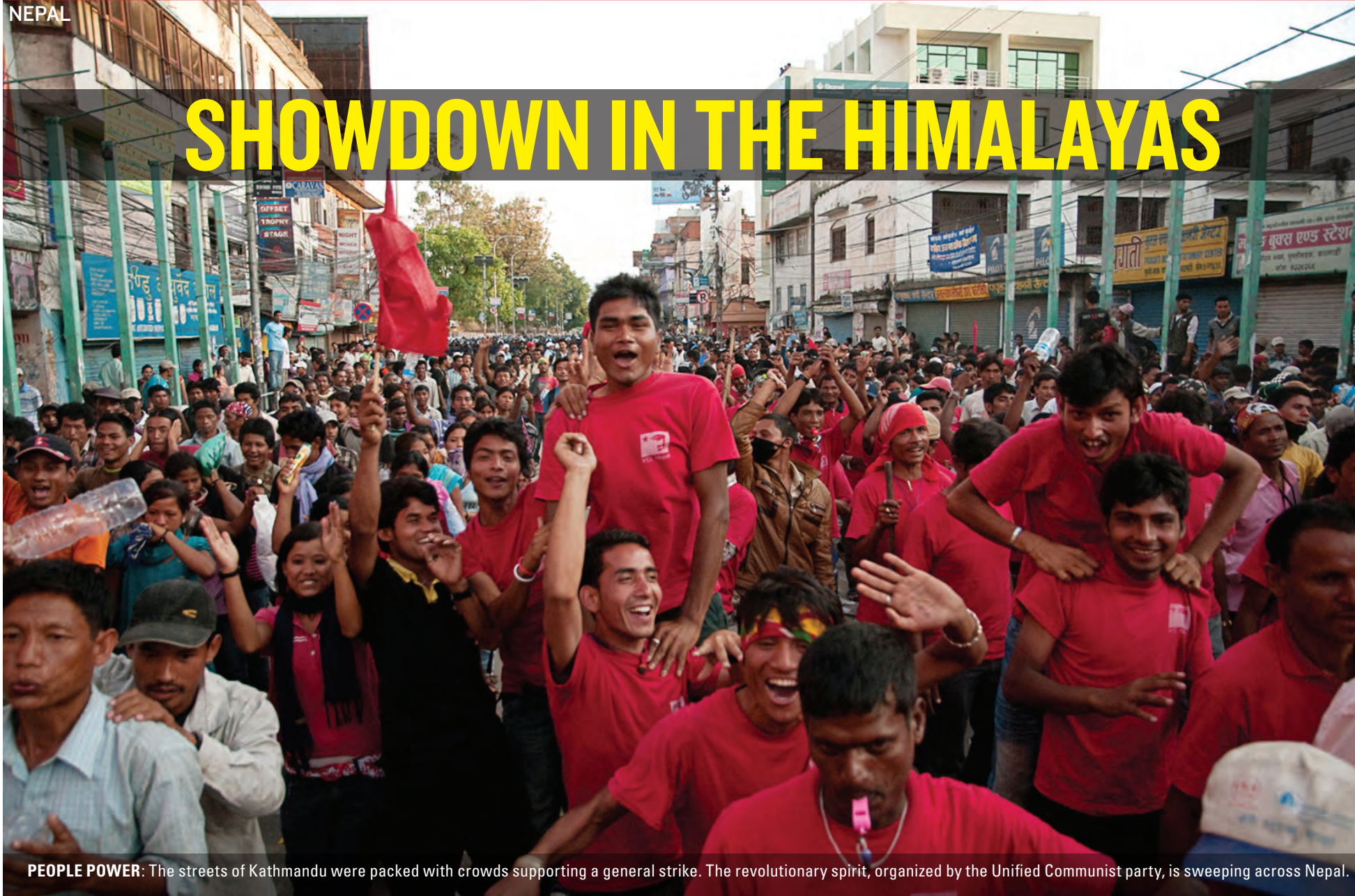
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PEOPLE POWER: The streets of Kathmandu were packed with crowds supporting a general strike. The revolutionary spirit, organized by the Unified Communist party, is sweeping across Nepal.

A nation of 28 million people, Nepal is in the middle of a tense standoff between a revolutionary movement and a weakened regime — and the moment of truth is fast approaching.

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY JED BRANDT

KATHMANDU, Nepal—Two power structures are at loggerheads in Nepal. One just finished filling the streets of the capital city with a massive civil uprising marked by both discipline and revelry. The other is backed by the rifles of the Nepalese Army and the heavy weight of feudal tradition.

The revolutionary movement led by the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) has a powerful base among the rural and urban poor, along with a disciplined political militia in the unarmed Young Communist

League and a partially demobilized People's Liberation Army. It seeks to topple Nepal's state apparatus — held over from the monarchy that was deposed just two years ago and composed of the ruling classes.

Urban civil uprisings in the mid-1990s first won a parliamentary system of government from the monarchy, but nothing really changed. When expectations crashed into the closed doors of realpolitik elite “democracy,” the Maoists pushed the door open. Over the next decade they built an army to fight a popular insurgency. More than 10,000 people lost their lives in what was the largest armed uprising in Nepal's history.

“It was the failure of the political parties to bring democracy, any real social change for the masses of people, that fueled the People's War,” said Yubaraj Lama, a prominent actor/director who was thrust into radical politics during the movement against the king. “This is what the Maoists changed. People were very fatalistic, looking up to politicians like princes. That is over.”

A second mass uprising in 2006 ended when the king agreed to elections that subsequently saw the Maoist leader Prachanda (Pushpa Kamal Dahal) elected prime minister. Buoyed by broad democratic sentiment,

other Maoists won the largest share of seats in Nepal's new parliament, which abolished the monarchy and announced plans to draft a new constitution.

The new leaders rejected the chance to become broker-politicians. When the Nepalese Army chief refused to integrate former Maoist fighters, Prachanda resigned from his post as prime minister. He returned to his supporters and launched a mobilization that could escalate if a constitution to their liking is not delivered. Which brings us to the present.

While the old army, bureaucracy and foreign treaties are still in effect, no work in the country can be done without the sanction of the Maoists. There are two armies and no real government, a situation of increasing pressure where one side will eventually try to act decisively.

MAY DAY

Kathmandu, with its banks and walled compounds, is where Nepal's national elite live. But on the May Day holiday — May 1st — the Maoists made their move there. The city's streets were taken over by more than 500,000 party members and their supporters. They demanded the resignation of

the country's unelected prime minister and the creation of a constitutional framework for a “New Nepal” that would put political power in the hands of the country's poor majority for the first time ever.

As the protest began, I positioned myself at Kalinki, one of 18 gathering points for marches that wound through the streets to converge at Martyr's Field in the center of Kathmandu. Red flags with the hammer and sickle were everywhere.

Thousands of restaurant and hotel workers assembled around me as contingents began to arrive. Many of the people who came from the rural areas wore traditional bright saris and wraps. They poured in from every direction, until the final group arrived to cries of “*Lal salaam!*” (“Red Salute!”). The sight of city workers and students meeting country farmers was a heart-warming contrast to the bigoted hostility and fear I see the elites express toward working-class people.

We started to march. Young Communist League cadre in their matching track suits set up perimeters protecting the route. They held hands in lines along the road and down the side streets leading in, facing off with lines of police wearing black body armor. Inside the crowd, recently trained protesters



Dancers and poets entertained people blocking the streets. Many students who participated in the protest said they did not embrace the Maoist ideology, but supported their call for the prime minister to step down.

formed circles within circles, like an onion, to keep the protests orderly and remain prepared in case of the violent repression that the prime minister threatened.

By midday the 18 marches converged at Martyr's Field. People overflowed out of the huge park and into the surrounding streets. The city was packed for miles in all directions, with loudspeakers echoing the speeches from the center stage. Prachanda and other Maoist leaders from cultural and military fronts shared the stage. The international press was noticeably absent.

The day ended without a resignation from Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal. So the next morning, the Maoists launched a general strike.

GENERAL STRIKE

By 7 a.m. on May 2, marchers were already in the street. They occupied every major intersection in the city. All stores were closed and shuttered. Protesters made way for emergency vehicles, press, diplomatic cars and water trucks servicing the crowd. The clamor of traffic was gone. The air, for once, was clear.

The only sounds were human; groups in conversation, the rise and fall of chanting groups moving in every direction. Clustered in groups of 50 to a few hundred, protesters filed out of occupied campuses, shopping centers and open fields converted into first-aid centers and communal kitchens. Dancers performed for circles of dem-

onstrators and poets moved like troubadours from corner to corner.

Near Singa Durbar, the government administration center, hundreds of police in riot gear behind steel barricades and coils of barbed wire faced off with the front edge of the protesters. They blocked the drive leading from the prime minister's walled compound.

Files of marchers moved in and out, then practiced running surges back and forth before the police lines. Hundreds of others sat in groups, passing newspapers around, clustering in meetings and sharing water from trucks festooned with red flags.

When an ambulance turned onto the blocked street, Lekhanath Neupane, a philosopher and leader of the Maoist-aligned All Nepal National Independent Students' Union (Revolutionary) directed the blockade to make way even while they waved their arms in frustration. “Today is a peaceful demonstration only,” Neupane said. “We will not stop lifelines for the people.”

The blockade was constant from dawn to dusk, when smoke started rising several streets down. Pyres were torched at a dozen locations near the city center in symbolic funerals for the current government and in theatrical climax to the day's action.

“Nobody is going home until we win. This is our country. These are our countrymen,” said one student whose slight build gave no clue to the years he spent in the People's Liberation Army during the People's War. His



Maoist leader Prachanda had clear message when he addressed thousands of protesters on May Day: “Your time has come.”

brother, a schoolteacher-turned-soldier, was among the first martyrs in the war, killed by police in 1996.

DRESS REHEARSAL

On May 3, protesters completely encircled the city twice over, holding hands in two 28-kilometer rows around the Ring Road belt that is one of Kathmandu's few modern roads. The show of popular power was overwhelming. But the government remained defiant, and the Maoists kept their promise for peaceful protests despite an escalating series of provocations.

By the sixth day of the general strike, the Maoists had shown their power with the total shutdown of business, schools and transportation. Supplies were running low, people lacked basic necessities, and clashes broke out in several cities. At the end of the day, Prachanda announced on television that the strike would be “suspended” and that rallies should converge the next day in Martyr's Field to discuss the movement's shift.

As I walked through the crowd toward the park there was more talk and speculation than chanting. The prime minister had not stepped down, and after two days of increasing tensions, many protesters were prepared for further escalations.

I ran into Manushi Yami Bhattara, a student activist at Tribuvan University and daughter of two Maoist party leaders. “In the People's War we had two ceasefires, and

used them to advance,” she said. “We will have a new tactical phase.”

“The Janandolan hasn't been called off,” Madushi said, referring to the Nepali word for a massive civil uprising. “Not the agitations either. Our goal is socialism, that is constant and we are not confused. Whether elections or People's War or this general strike, we find our tactics from our goals.”

In the park, Prachanda told thousands of core Maoist activists that the general strike was preparation for a revolt. Should the government not make way, he said, the general strike would return without the “peacefulness” and “patience” of the six-day shutdown.

Now a May 28 deadline for Nepal's first democratic constitution looms. Prime Minister Nepal refuses to step down, and has continued to call on the Maoists to disband their People's Liberation Army and Young Communist League. For their part, the Maoists have mobilized the largest movement of people in Nepal's history, and rejected talks with the governmental parties until the prime minister steps aside.

“The strike was only a dress rehearsal,” said Prachanda. “We will show you the entire drama before May 28 if our demands are not met.”

Jed Brandt is a New York-based independent journalist reporting from Nepal. His work appears on jedbrandt.net. He is a participant in the Kasama Project.



NEPAL FACTS

CAPITAL: Kathmandu
POPULATION: 28 million
RELIGION: Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim
AVERAGE PER-CAPITA INCOME: \$500
YOU'VE HEARD OF IT BECAUSE: Nepal is home to Mount Everest, the world's tallest mountain

Officially the Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal, this landlocked country in the Himalayas was until recently a feudal monarchy.

In the mid-1990s Maoist rebels launched a decade-long fight to establish a socialist state. In 2006 other political parties joined in mass protests that ushered in Nepal's first democratic elections. Maoists won the largest share of seats in the new parliament.

On May 29, 2008, Nepal's parliament voted to dissolve the 239-year-old monarchy and established a secular democratic republic. Mao-

ist leader Prachanda (Pushpa Kamal Dahal) became prime minister of the new government but resigned about a year later when other political parties thwarted his effort to fire the chief of the Nepalese Army. The chief had been appointed by the former king and refused to integrate former rebel fighters into his forces.

The stand-off between the Maoists and remnants of the old regime continues to this day as the country struggles to draft a new constitution.



HOLDING THE LINE: Rows of demonstrators create pedestrian blockades along Kathmandu's streets



EQUALITY: Breaking centuries of tradition, women have entered political life via the revolution.



POLICE BRUTALITY: Anjara Bishankhe was rushed to the hospital after Hindu-chauvinist gangs and police attacked Maoist protests.

The Climate Justice Groundswell

FROM COPENHAGEN TO COCHABAMBA TO CANCUN

BY KARAH WOODWARD

TIQUIPAYA, Bolivia — Bolivian President Evo Morales spoke for many developing nations last December when he rejected the United Nation's Copenhagen Accord as “an agreement reached between the world's biggest polluters that is based on the exclusion of the very countries, communities and peoples who will suffer most from the consequences of climate change.”

Many of those most disappointed in the talks were enthusiastic participants in the World People's Conference on Climate Change called by Morales from April 19 to 22. With an emphasis on the inclusion of indigenous voices and the “rights of Mother Earth,” people from over 120 nations and organizations gathered in Tiquipaya, on the outskirts of Cochabamba, to debate how to confront the climate crisis.

“We are here to establish a different position that maybe will influence the processes in the future,” said Vera Mugittu, a representative of the Pan-African Climate Justice Alliance, “so that Africa can have a better deal.”

That deal was developed during four days of intense meetings among 17 working groups, where genuine dialogue was encouraged. Topics varied from the rights of Mother Earth and harmony with Mother Nature to climate debt and climate justice. “Whether we agreed or whether we disagreed, it didn't matter,” said Shetal Shah, who worked with the Bolivian Mission to the United Nations to organize the summit, “we're having the dialogue.”

Bolivia — a multiethnic socialist state — shaped the talks by fostering a critique of the capitalist system and its push for market-based solutions to solving the climate

like rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. And yes, it's a revolution and we need that kind of revolution.”

Other participants argued anti-capitalist rhetoric would stall progress in negotiations with wealthy countries. “The climate change movement needs to be an environmental movement” and not a social revolution, said Adam Zemans, director of Environment Bolivia. He said trying to overthrow capitalism while combating climate change is “counter-productive.”

Many of the working groups benefited from learning about regional struggles, and became more familiar with the diverse points of view held by their colleagues. While not in total consensus on all points, they reached agreements that will be useful rallying points for future climate talks.

An unofficial working group, known as Table 18, included a critique of Bolivia's strategies for economic development that include mining and drilling for oil and gas. Among the participants were residents of Salar de Uyuni, who were protesting a transnational mining company at the same time of the conference. The group's final agreement questioned “predatory and con-

After years of exclusion from climate talks dominated by industrial concerns of wealthy nations, indigenous people and civil society forge a plan to tackle the climate crisis.

sumerist logic — the logic of death based on developmentalism and neo-extractivism.”

There was general support for the creation of an International Climate and En-



ONE WORLD: The World People's Conference on Climate Change was held in Bolivia in April, attracting some 15,000 people from around the world to participate.

PHOTO: KARAH WOODWARD

an arbitral body that would resolve disputes over biodiversity, fresh water access, habitats and health.

Ultimately, the People's Agreement presented at the conference's closing ceremony

identified the capitalist system in wealthy countries as the main driver of climate change. It called for restorative justice through an Adaptation Fund — financed by 6 percent of the Gross Domestic Product of developed nations — that would assist countries in dealing with the impact of climate change. This includes reduced food security, the loss of water due to retreating glaciers, more frequent and intense “natural” disasters, an increase in mosquito-borne diseases, and more forest fires. The agreement also demanded the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to a level that will prevent global temperatures from rising more than two degrees Celsius.

“By aggregating the voluntary commitments in the [failed] Copenhagen Accord, we are talking about a temperature increase of at least four degrees,” said Nnimmo Bassey, chair of Friends of the Earth International. That “increase in temperature clearly means a death sentence to Africa, to the small island states, to the Arctic states and to all the vulnerable nations.”

After the World People's Conference, it is unlikely such an agreement can be forced on these nations again. President Morales, along with an international delegation representing civil society, formally delivered the People's Agreement on May 7 to U.N. General Secretary Ban Ki Moon — the first step toward influencing talks during the next U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change, this December in Cancun, Mexico.

You can read the People's Agreement, and conclusion statements from each working group, on the homepage for the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth: pwccc.wordpress.com.

New Yorkers Make Connections at the People's Conference on Climate Change



Brooklyn Food Coalition

“I think food one of the ways that people in the ‘Global North,’ in particular people from the United States, can relate to climate change,” said Nancy Romer, founder of the Brooklyn Food Coalition and a participant in the conference's Food Sovereignty working group. “Climate change is both scary and very abstract. People don't know what they can do about it. Food is a way for people to come together.” For more about local food justice, visit brooklynfoodcoalition.org.



Muslim Women's Institute for Research and Development

“In the United States, it's as if climate change is something in the future. But being in Cochabamba, whether it's the loss of a glacier or the fact that almost all the riverbeds I walked past are dry, it's not the future, it's now,” said Nurah Amat'ullah, executive director of the Bronx-based Muslim Women's Institute for Research and Development. “I think a global climate justice movement can be built just by people-to-people engagement and sharing. If among the 5,000-plus people we serve at our food pantry each month, I can communicate the urgency of now, in regard to the current climate crisis, I think I will make some small contribution to the movement and bring us closer to critical mass; the one grain of sand that begins the avalanche.” For more information visit mward.org.



RESPECTING THE LAND: The conference began with an Andean K'oa (ceremony) in honor of Pachamama (Mother Earth). Bolivia is a diverse, multiethnic socialist state.

PHOTO: REUBEN MCCREANOR, UPSIDEDOWNWORLD.ORG

crisis. “Either capitalism lives or Mother Earth lives,” said Morales on the opening day of the summit. Many participants agreed. Projects to protect the environment “cannot ignore the structural changes that have to happen,” said Ruth Kaplan with the Alliance for Democracy. “Otherwise, it's

environmental Justice Tribunal. The tribunal would punish states, transnational corporations or people who violate agreements like the Kyoto Protocol, which currently lacks an enforcement mechanism. However, such a tribunal would require deep reform within the United Nations, leading some to favor



DRIED HOPE: Don Cristobal, Bolivian farmer, stands in his dying corn crop.
PHOTO: REUBEN MCCREANOR

The Dusty Road to a Socialist State

BY ALEX VAN SCHAIK

TOTORCAHUA, Bolivia—Ten minutes down a dusty road from the World Peoples’ Conference on Climate Change, Don Cristobal points to a plot of wilted corn on the same land his grandparents tended.

“Here in Totorcahua, climate change is the principal problem causing our crops to fail,” Cristobal says of the once fertile area that now suffers from rising temperatures and less rainfall. “The most important thing is for the government to support agriculture.”

Cristobal has lost money on his crops and is just barely eking out a living selling the milk from his dairy cows. But he is in a position to demand more support from Bolivia’s governing Movement Towards Socialism party (MAS). He is finishing his second term as leader of Totorcahua’s Organización Territorial del Base, a small governing body that represents the community and receives funds from the government for local projects.

Farmers here are known as *regantes* or “irrigators” because of their affiliation with the Irrigators Federation of Cochabamba, one of the rural social movements that provide a base of support for MAS. These movements played a decisive role in rebellions beginning in 2000 that forced two presidents to resign and ended with the election of Evo Morales as president in 2005.

Last December, Morales won his reelection bid with strong support from rural voters who make up roughly two-fifths of Bolivia’s population. The process “will not be easy, it could take decades, even centuries,” Morales said. “But it is clear that the social movements cannot achieve true power without implanting a socialist and communitarian horizon.”

The presidency of Morales, an indigenous farmer who earned his reputation in social struggle, is in stark contrast to previous governments dominated by white or mestizo urban elites. Although MAS struggles at times

with allegations of patronage, corruption and intense factional struggles between different sectors, Morales’ popularity remains high. “After holding many workshops and meetings on the subject, we are satisfied with the job of the president,” Cristobal says. “Before, the indigenous small farmers were forgotten, hated and subject to discrimination.”

The Morales administration has tried to address bread-and-butter issues neglected by previous governments, particularly in rural areas: literacy, investment in roads and electrification and infrastructure projects to support farmers. For example, Totorcahua received a new well that serves the area’s 45 family farms. A recently approved project will improve local roads.

Cristobal says the government has opened a national seed bank and the state agricultural bank is making available to farmers loans at 0 percent interest until harvest time. But he notes there are still serious unmet needs, particularly to continue to improve access to water in an area that was once lush with vegetation.

“The government needs to improve our irrigation. First, the channels need to be fixed up,” Cristobal says. Communal channels carrying spring water from nearby mountains have been the main source of irrigation for the regantes. Cristobal says he has called for additional wells to be opened.

He remains undecided about the government’s communitarian socialist direction. “We’re still in the middle of the process of changing our country,” Cristobal says. “If we see that it’s a good route for the change and to improve the conditions of our lives, then it’s something we will support.”

Alex van Schaick is a former North American Congress on Latin America (NACLA) research associate and Fulbright scholar who studied politics and land conflict in Bolivia.

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When an Ounce of Prevention is Worth

By Laura S. Boylan

Preventive medicine is widely considered a panacea for all that ails both the body and the healthcare system. But sometimes an ounce of alleged prevention can lead to a pound of real harm. Extensive testing for diseases like breast and prostate cancers leads to overdiagnosis and overtreatment, meaning unnecessary surgeries, illness and death. It is worth examining how some vested interests promote specific preventive medical procedures in the United States.

Money is a significant factor in the prevention industry. Revenue for equipment, facilities and personnel for mammography screening runs into the billions of dollars annually. Societies of medical specialists endorse practices that maximize their members' earnings and enlarge their role in providing medical care. An increase in screenings inevitably results in more interventions. Perhaps 30 percent of all surgeries and procedures in the United States are unnecessary. Some of the strongest evidence comes from studies demonstrating enormous geographic variation. Those areas with more interventions do not have different needs or better outcomes. Unusually high rates of various procedures, it turns out, are driven by local patterns of specialist availability and referral rather than health needs. At the same time it is estimated that unnecessary surgeries cause 12,000 deaths annually. Many experts claim that excess interventions and the harm they cause are an important factor in explaining why the United States is behind other industrialized nations when it comes to infant mortality, life expectancy and mortality at all ages. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that unnecessary "care" costs \$700 billion a year.

In a recent op-ed in *The New York Times*, the researcher who developed the PSA screening test for prostate cancer called its overuse a "profit-driven public health disaster." Men over 50 have undergone widespread screening for prostate cancer since the test was introduced in 1970. While long-term studies have failed to produce the expected decline in prostate cancer deaths, there has been a massive increase in its early diagnosis and treatment. Treatment

can involve radiation and surgery. Many prostate cancers are very slow growing and never cause problems. A small number are aggressive and will prove lethal. With no way to distinguish them, widespread early intervention almost certainly causes incontinence and impotence among many men who would never have otherwise been affected by their prostate cancer.

The United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) is an independent panel of doctors and nurses that provides

rigorous scientific and evidence-based assessments of preventive interventions. Panel members are strictly prohibited from conflicts of interest, and recommendations are not based on cost. Many medical societies consider their recommendations to be the "gold standard."

The task force came to public attention after it recommended reducing mammograms because of the risk from overdiagnosis, overtreatment and radiation from X-rays used in the screening. The guidelines, released in November 2009, suggest that only women at high risk of breast cancer undergo mammography before they are 50. For most women, mammograms every two years from age 50 to 75 were advised.

The concern is that testing may cause more illness and death among younger women than it prevents. Pre-menopausal women have a relatively low risk of breast cancer and a high risk of both complications from radiation exposure and misdiagnosis of cancer. This is because younger women have denser breasts. By some estimates, mammograms themselves may be causing more breast cancer

all women over 40, so that a woman living to age 80 would undergo a minimum of 40 mammograms. Following USPSTF guidelines, most women would instead have a total of 13 mammograms. Needless to say, this has caused a lot of confusion and anguish, especially for those diagnosed with breast cancer. Joan, a writer who lives in Vermont, was treated for breast cancer



GARY MARTIN
MARTOONIC.COM

than they are detecting for younger women, despite low dosages per individual scan. The flap that ensued over the USPSTF recommendations revealed how vested interests push prevention. After the task force issued its findings, the airwaves and press were dominated by individuals who had significant conflicts of interest, such as ties to groups representing radiologists and equipment manufacturers. Their message was that "countless women would die" and USPSTF's recommendations were driven by cost considerations. Several medical societies with skin in the game suggest many more screenings than the USPSTF. The American College of Radiology and the American Society of Breast Surgeons recommend annual mammography for

after her first-ever mammogram at age 42. Five years later there is no sign of cancer recurrence. "I just don't know what to think," she says, recounting her reaction to the USPSTF recommendations. "Maybe my life was saved, maybe not. Once something's called a cancer, though, there's no going back." Joan's case raises the issue of overdiagnosis and treatment. When a needle biopsy detected ductal carcinoma in situ — the lowest-grade tissue change considered malignant — she underwent surgery and a course of radiation. Malignancy is not a black-and-white diagnosis, it exists across a spectrum of tissue changes and experts sometimes disagree on where to draw the line. In one study pathologists disagreed on the diagnosis of needle biopsies 10 percent of the time.

SCREENING TEST	MEDICAL INTERVENTION INCREASED BY SCREENING	RISKS	U.S. PREVENTIVE SERVICE TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS	OTHER GROUPS RECOMMENDATIONS	MONETARY INTERESTS
Mammogram for breast cancer	Breast surgery, radiation, chemotherapy	More women will get sick and die from overtreatment than will be helped by needed treatment.	One mammogram every two years from age 50 to 74	Breast surgeons, radiologists — every year after age 40	Equipment manufacturers, drug companies, and doctors who perform surgeries, give radiation or chemotherapy. Average cost of treatment for the earliest stage of cancer \$16K.*
PSA blood test for prostate cancer	Prostate biopsy, removal and radiation	Many more men suffer impotence and incontinence due to overtreatment than would have become sick with prostate cancer. Infections and other complications also occur.	Harm exceeds benefit for men over age 75, insufficient evidence for younger men	Urologists — yearly after age 40	Doctors who perform biopsies, surgeries and radiation treatments, hospitals. Average radical prostatectomy cost is \$10K.**
Ultrasound of arteries in the neck for stroke prevention	Surgery and intravascular procedures on neck arteries	Risk of stroke or death within 30 days of carotid surgery at best centers is 3 percent.	Should not be done routinely	Vascular surgeons — everyone over age 55 with any vascular risk factor	Doctors who open the vessels, or consult with patients, and hospitals. Average surgery cost \$15K.***
Total body CT scan for detection of calcium in the heart or other vessels and tumors	Further imaging, testing, procedures and possible surgeries	Radiation exposure, unnecessary procedures and complications	CTs not recommended for any routine screening. National Cancer Institute, American College of Radiology and FDA all caution against overuse.	Virtual Physical recommends for everyone over 30	Companies who offer tests, doctors who read the images and may own the centers. Cost of scans ranges from \$300-\$1,200.

*Figures from California Breast Cancer research program; **Cost is from April 2010 Journal of Urology; ***Cost is from Internet Stroke Center

a Pound of Harm

In fact, as best as contemporary science can determine, many women diagnosed with “carcinoma in situ” detected on a mammogram will never develop breast cancer. Their lesions will not evolve or will disappear. No one knows the numbers for sure but the USPSTF’s best estimate is that as many as 10 percent of cancers are overdiagnosed. Other estimates run as high as 70 percent.

In a similar fashion, the professional society of surgeons who operate on neck arteries to prevent stroke endorses ultrasound screening for anyone over 55 with any vascular risk factor for carotid artery disease, including high blood pressure and diabetes. The USPSTF says testing people who have no sign of stroke is likely to cause more harm than good because it can lead to unnecessary surgeries. Clinical trials show that at least three percent of even the best surgeons’ patients can be expected to have a stroke or die because of the surgery. No other medical society recommends aggressive screening in line with that recommended by the vascular surgeons.

The American Urological Association, representing surgeons who perform biopsies and prostate surgery, recommends screening all men over 40 unless they don’t want to be tested or have a life expectancy of less than 10 years.

Just as many men have undergone unnecessary and harmful interventions set in motion by PSA testing, many women with ductal carcinoma in situ have likely been treated unnecessarily. Some women who get surgery, chemotherapy and radiation will die from the treatments. Radiation therapy for breast cancer is standard for even the lowest-grade cancer. This treatment alone can be expected to cause a second cancer in one to two of each 100 women treated. That’s a risk worth taking only if you have to.

A sobering reality reflecting our limited understanding of cancer biology is that even aggressive surgical measures to prevent cancers sometimes fail: total surgical removal of the prostate, breasts, or ovaries is sometimes followed by the mysterious appearance of tumors with origin from these tissues. It may be that micro-metastases lurk in the bodies of some individuals even before a primary cancer is detected or that some tissue has remained despite apparent removal. It’s just not known.

BEWARE OF THE CUTTING EDGE

Dr. Claudia Henschke at Weill Cornell Medical Center advocated routine chest CT scans, a type of X-ray, for anyone who had ever smoked, purporting that most lung cancers could be prevented this way. Her research supporting this conclusion was published in top medical journals without initial disclosure that it was funded heavily by tobacco manufacturers and that she stood to gain from patents on related technology. Weill Cornell may have facilitated the operations of a foundation set up to obscure the funding sources and also had a financial stake in research-related patents. The story of tobacco industry backing and conflicts of interest was featured in *The New York Times* in 2008.

Emily had undergone about half a dozen annual chest CTs before the 2008 Times report. At her next visit to her pulmonologist she asked about the report. “Oh yes,” he said, “we won’t be doing any more of those as your condition hasn’t changed.” She saw him one more time and then the semi-annual follow-up reminders she’d received for years just stopped.

One prominent specialist has taken the idea of prevention even further. “Preventive intervention for first-episode depression is an exciting, emerging field,” wrote Dr. Richard Robinson, chairman of Psychiatry at the University of Iowa Carver School of Medicine, in an April 2009 editorial in the *British Journal of Psychiatry*. Cautioning against

“setting sights too low,” Robinson envisions treating all 20- to 30-year-olds regardless of mood symptoms with two to three months of antidepressants based on the idea that this might prevent later psychiatric or even medical problems. Dr. Robinson declared he had no conflicts of interest, despite having recently been the focus of a scandal for failing to disclose financial ties to the pharmaceutical industry.

The controversy related to a report by Robinson in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* showing that treatment with Lexapro prevented depression in patients who had just had a stroke. As it turned out, he failed to note that the study found psychotherapy to be equally effective, and he did not disclose his financial ties to Lexapro’s manufacturer. What brought attention to this was *JAMA*’s attack on Jonathan Leo, the whistleblower in the affair. “He’s a nobody and a nothing,” the editor of *JAMA* told the *Wall Street Journal*. Dr. Leo says *JAMA* editors threatened to damage his career if he didn’t retract his allegations, all of which were eventually acknowledged to be correct by Robinson and *JAMA*, which, like other medical journals, is dependent on income from pharmaceutical industry advertisements.

PREVENTION: STEPPING STONE TO DISEASE CONSTRUCTION

The market for any given treatment can be expanded by applying it to more people. The most focused efforts target only the sick. Earlier patient identification expands this pool and can be achieved by treating people with milder and milder symptoms. Screening a population considered “at risk” but not necessarily showing any symptoms may bring minor symptoms into the spotlight. The natural culmination of market expansion is the creation of illness. This practice, referred to as “disease-mongering” can be seen daily on your television. You may find yourself reflecting ... perhaps your erections are not as hard as they should be ... maybe you are clinically depressed ... maybe things could be better.

Private insurance companies in competitive environments have found another way to use “wellness” as a way to increase profit margins. To attract subscribers to their plans, they promote various incentives, such as free or discounted gym memberships. It is likely, however, that gym plans are offered to entice healthy people who will cost the companies less money. On the other hand, many insurance plans provide no coverage for smoking cessation interventions, which have been well established as having a high net benefit. My last Aetna plan offered reduced charges at various gyms, but coverage of smoking cessation was excluded. Who wants to attract smokers to their plans?

True prevention is a wonderful thing, and defining what works and what doesn’t is an ongoing process. The great leaps forward in life expectancy in the modern age are attributable to prevention more than to treatment, starting with sanitation.

But a number of current interventions get a “Grade A” recommendation from USPSTF because solid evidence supports “high certainty that the net benefit is substantial.” These include cervical exams and PAP smears for sexually active women, smoking cessation interventions, blood pressure checks and colonoscopies for those over 50. All recommendations and guidelines are on the USPSTF website. But a wise patient should not leap at everything packaged as prevention.

Editor’s Note: names have been changed to protect patients’ privacy.

Laura S. Boylan, M.D., is a practicing neurologist, faculty member at the New York University School of Medicine and board member of Physicians for a National Health Program Metro NY.



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ESSAY

Common Narrative

BY MOLLY REED

I've always romanticized the notion of history represented by dusty stacks and rare archives, and last summer I decided to produce an audio collection of my grandfather's small, but precious, library of pre-modern poetry and classic literature. With the exception of several biographies and late 20th century histories and natural science texts, the majority of his books have long been out of copyright, and are thus in the public domain. In the shed outside the Rhode Island cottage that still houses his collection, I set up my microphone and laptop, and began recording popular short stories of the early 20th century.

At the same time, I was becoming actively involved with the Fellowship for Intentional Community, a nonprofit institution dedicated to providing resources for individuals seeking community in the form of urban co-housing, eco-villages, self-sufficient communes and collectives. These two interests converged when I was first exposed to Robert Owen's socialist 1813 treatise *A New View of Society*. Delving into the written history of communal experiments in the late 19th century, I have since cultivated this interest by becoming a recreational manufacturer of audio recordings, producing spoken albums of philosophical texts, instructive novels, letters and travel diaries.

Owen was a British thread manufacturer who rose through the ranks amid the harsh conditions of textile factories at the turn of the 19th century. Owen's ideas won't strike contemporary readers as particularly novel: his principle tenet was the familiar precept that a person's character is not formed innately but by the social advantages from which she or he benefits. But the fact that Owen held the power required to put such ideas into practice, and was met with enthusiasm and great respect by his peers and the working-class citizens whose rights he championed, continues to amaze.

Owen established an experimental industrial community called New Lanark in rural Scotland — a model society designed to enhance the quality of life for the working class. He improved employee housing and local road conditions, set up a communal healthcare fund and imposed a series of social edicts to shape the moral direction of the community. He also abolished the standard practice of employing young children in factories and established the Institute for the Formation of Character, a school for factory employees and their children. Owen's factory community was highly productive, and the scope of his vision encompassed all contemporary social and economic problems.

A New View of Society's shortcomings are typical of the experimental genre of 19th century uto-

pian non-fiction: any individual with 190 years of hindsight can perceive that Owen drastically overstates the feasibility of his ideas being widely adopted, and many of his attitudes, particularly regarding women, religion, and class mobility — while progressive at the time — come across in the 21st century as unenlightened.

By far the greatest obstacle I have encountered while trying to produce compelling audio recordings of heavy ideological treatises of the 19th century is that, though they are at times fiery and inspiring, they can also be frustratingly dull, delving into the minutiae of their authors' solutions to the world's problems with a fantastic degree of detail. A welcome respite from the sincere, long-winded visions of the future reflected in historical testimonials, letters and diaries written by members of experimental utopian communities can be found in a parallel literary movement that endeavors to illustrate daily life in an ideal society. Thomas More's *Utopia* defined this genre in 1516, and the authors that followed consciously echo his engaging, colloquial narrative structure.

Such works of utopian fiction held great influence over these authors' contemporaries, and, read today, they retain their moving,

Bradford Peck's *The World a Department Store* and William Dean Howells' *Traveler from Altruria*.

French intellectual Charles Fourier is another zealous experimental thinker whose vision inspired

founded the Brook Farm Institute of Agriculture and Education, a Fourier-style utopian commune in what is now Boston.

In addition to the titles mentioned above, audio recordings I



The Life and Literature of the Commons: Selected Reading

A New View of Society and Other Writings by Robert Owen, edited with an introduction by Gregory Claeys, Penguin Classics 1991. The entire text of *A New View of Society* is also available online at marxists.org.

News From Nowhere by William Morris, 1908 reprinting by Longmans of London. Available for download via marxists.org.

Social Destiny of Man, Or, Association and Reorganization of Industry Nabu Press, 2010, Paperback. The entire original text is available online and for PDF download through Google Books.

A Traveler from Altruria by William Dean Howells. Available online and in various formats for download through the Gutenberg Project: gutenberg.org/etext/8449

Travels in Icaria by Etienne Cabet. Syracuse University Press, 2003.

Utopia by Thomas More, with an introduction by Clarence H. Miller. Yale University Press, 2001. A free e-book version is available through the Gutenberg Project: gutenberg.org.

The World a Department Store: Life Under a Coöperative System by Bradford Peck. Nabu Press, 2010. The entire original text is available online and for PDF download through Google Books.

persuasive power. For example, Etienne Cabet's *Voyage et aventures de lord William Carisdall en Icarie* (*Travel and Adventures of Lord William Carisdall in Icaria*) successfully inspired 280 of Cabet's French disciples to follow him to Illinois to establish an Icarian community that flourished for almost 50 years. This literary movement gained momentum beginning with Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward*, the story of a young man who, under the influence of a "mesmerizer," falls asleep, and wakes up in the year 2000 to discover that the world has become a socialist utopia. The wild success of this novel in 1888 gave rise to a succession of imitators who produced meditations on the same theme, including William Morris' *News from Nowhere*,

his contemporaries to radical social reforms in their communities. Fourier promoted "phalausteries," 4,000-acre communities that would abolish national boundaries. Fourierism was adopted and brought to the United States by Albert Brisbane, who translated Fourier's works in *The Social Destiny of Man* (1840). This translation was received enthusiastically by critics and journalists and launched the development of several successful phalausteries in Pennsylvania, Texas, New York, New Jersey, Iowa, Wisconsin, Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. Many leading American intellectuals embraced Fourierism, including *New York Tribune* editor Horace Greeley, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne and Transcendentalist George Ripley, who in 1841

have produced include John Adolphus Etzler's *A Paradise Within the Reach of All Men, Without Labor, by Powers of Nature and Machinery*; H.G. Wells' *What Are We To Do With Our Lives?*; Louisa May Alcott's *Transcendental Wild Oats*, a satirical, fictionalized account of life in the religious community founded by her father, Amos Bronson Alcott; as well as early constitutions from and letters requesting admission to experimental utopian communities.

Audio books will be available as of June 2010 at villavillanola.com, a Montreal-based website that sells recordings. Head to indpendent.org to hear some of these audio archives now, or contact info@villavillanola.com with any questions or special requests.

Coloring the Abortion Debate

BY KASIA GLADKI

In the April 26th issue of *Newsweek*, Sarah Kliff ignited a firestorm of debate with her article “Remember Roe!”, asking, “How can the next generation defend abortion rights when they don’t think abortion rights need defending?” In the still-choppy wake of the healthcare reform bill’s passage — made possible in part by a compromise of reproductive rights that bans federally funded abortion coverage — Kliff’s question reopened a debate that harkens back to the 1970s and that, perplexingly, is still defined in narrow terms that fail to represent most women.

What sent the *Newsweek* article

ricocheting across the blogosphere was Kliff’s citation of a NARAL study in order to argue that reproductive rights are vulnerable because the younger generation of pro-choice feminists is indifferent to the cause of protecting those rights. The study found that fewer abortion-rights supporters considered the issue “very important” than their pro-life counterparts, and that pro-life advocates more successfully harnessed their supporters’ fervor. Kliff hitched her citation to NARAL President Nancy Keenan’s anecdotal observation that [Keenan] “just doesn’t see a passion among the post-Roe generation” of pro-choice women.

The post-Roe generation reacted

swiftly, snuffing any doubts about their “passion for the cause.” Within hours of the article’s publication, the Twitter stream #fem2 (for “feminist 2.0”) accumulated responses from young activists railing against Kliff’s reliance on a limited study and subjective corroboration from the feminist establishment. “Note to Older Feminists: WE EXIST!” announced a post on AbortionGang.org, a blog run by young reproductive-rights activists. Young representatives from organizations like Choice USA and the National Organization of Women (NOW) weighed in; a Twitter petition called for *Newsweek* to interview young activists; and the reaction snowballed as mainstream websites like Feministing.com and Gawker Media’s Jezebel.com joined the chorus.

Yet an important point was lost in the debate: it wasn’t only younger women that were disregarded by traditional organizations like NARAL. The reality is that any constituency that doesn’t fit the Feminist profile defined by white, upper-middle-class champions of the 1970s women’s movement is excluded from the discourse. The mass of rejoinders to Kliff’s article had forgotten third-wave feminism, the vital contributions of

bell hooks and Chandra Talpade Mohanty. Women of color and low-income women were simply absent from NARAL’s study and the subsequent debate; so this great opportunity for a reevaluation of feminism and the reproductive-rights movement was squandered.

It is well documented that abortion rates are much higher within minority communities; the rate among black women is more than five times that of white women. The pro-life contingent uses these statistics to inundate African-American communities with media campaigns claiming that family planning organizations like Planned Parenthood are colluding in a program of population control. “Black Children are an Endangered Species,” proclaim billboards erected throughout Atlanta by Georgia Right to Life. Right to Life obviously thinks it important to reach communities of color, so why does direct engagement with these audiences still elude pro-choice organizations like NARAL?

These same billboards — and the Georgia’s Senate Bill 529 that accompanied them, criminalizing abortion “solicitation” to women of color — were vigorously opposed and ultimately defeated by a coalition of reproductive-justice organizations run by women of

color. SisterSong, SPARK Reproductive Justice Now! and Sisterlove mobilized a successful campaign that killed the bill before it went to a vote. “We truly raised the voices of women of color,” said Heidi Williamson, National Policy Coordinator for SisterSong. This is the passionate, triumphant voice missing from the *Newsweek* article debate.

There are many other minority-run reproductive-justice organizations across America. Desiree Flores, Program Officer at the Ms. Foundation for Women — a national non-profit that funds many such organizations — says their innovative tactics ensure the health of the movement: “They’re bringing people traditionally written off as unlikely allies or lacking political power into the reproductive-rights movement,” and their message goes “beyond ‘pro-choice’ or ‘pro-life’ in order to reach ... people for whom these terms are outdated.”

As the dynamics of race, class and labor in America continue to change, it’s imperative that the voices of minority and low-income women be heard in the reproductive-rights debate. Only then will the movement reflect all the dimensions of justice that belong to a feminism for our times.



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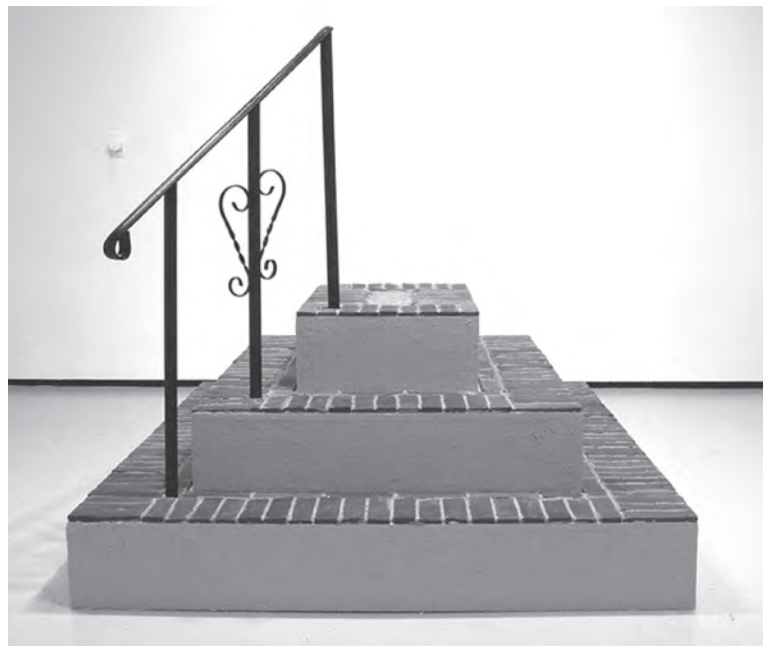
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Racial Reflections: Uptown Museum Nights

The stereo speakers, arranged together in an altar-like presentation, emit murmurs of some garbled, holy tongue. Each has a lacquered black bull's-eye at its center — a locus of power and energy. This sound sculpture, “Coronation Theme: Organon” by Nadine Robinson, takes formal cues from a southern Baptist church and a 1963 civil-rights demonstration. But whether you know that has no bearing on the tremulous and wholly American sense of faith it projects.

The work is part of “After 1968,” a show that traveled to the Bronx Museum from the High Museum in Atlanta, Ga., in which African-American artists — all born after 1968 — reflect on the legacy of the American civil-rights movement (“Road to Freedom,” an exhibition of classic civil-rights-era photos, is on view in the room next door). In many ways, it's a show about absence: things left unsaid or undone. Leslie Hewitt's photographs — assemblages of tattered paperbacks, sun-bleached snapshots and shaggy domestic details — play as elegies for urban childhoods in late 20th-century America. Her work is compelling but can frustrate,



gun-toting thugs with a naïve rebellious streak. The other story is that of a national political party that provided free meals and job training in poor communities. By bringing the Black Panthers into public schools, the project is both path-worn nostalgia and bold contemporary praxis.

Jefferson Pinder's work accomplishes a similar time-traveling legerdemain. In “Afro-Cosmonaut Alien (White Noise),” a video, the artist paints himself white and merges into a projection screen, wincing and squirming as dizzying outer-space film reels — fiery rocketships and hovering space shuttles — burn and sparkle on his grimacing face. The soundtrack includes “Whitey on the Moon,” Gil Scott-Heron's classic 1970 proto-hip-hop track on the staggering divide between the United States' imperial showmanship in the Cold War space race and the grim, quotidian realities of urban Americans. Pinder's project suggests birth and rebirth: Pinder's biological birth in 1970 counterposed with revolutionary energies creating new kinds of people and histories — one small Big Bang. Pinder's video represents iconic power; the question is where that power really originates.

Hank Willis Thomas' “Unbranded” shows selected cuts from the last 40 years of Black representation in mainstream advertising. You can imagine the advertisers congratulating themselves for such progressive images — a vacationing Black couple being served by a solemn white waiter, a lithe Black woman curling her naked body behind ivory-white household soap

products. Thomas reminds us that when it comes to advertising — that is, money, status and power — identities are always appropriated and race is ever-present.

POLITICS IN CLIPS

A few subway stops away, the Studio Museum is showing “VidéoStudio: New Work from France,” featuring recent work by three video artists, each raised in North Africa and educated in France. In Bouchra Khalili's “Straight Stories — Part 1,” we hear the testimonials of Moroccan immigrants living in Europe, while we watch grubby footage of ferries and rocky borders; we don't see the person talking. Khalili's video amplifies the presence of race and ethnicity by hiding it: it meditates on the ways that personal identities are woven into political and social realities. Yto Barrada's “The Magician” is a bare-bones performance-documentary — two Moroccan men pulling ribbons from their mouths and doing tricks with live roosters. African men creating imagined realities in a distinctly European idiom; Barrada doesn't want us to judge or quantify anything — she just wants us to think about race as a pervasive source of meaning.

In all of this artwork, there's a sense of locating and engaging with power. “After 1968” ends with Adam Pendleton's work: dark, austere, self-consciously artsy paintings. Of course this work is about race, politics and revolution. How could it not be?

—MIKE NEWTON

“After 1968: Contemporary Artists and the Civil Rights Legacy” will run until Aug. 11 at The Bronx Museum of the Arts at 1040 Grand Concourse at 165th Street. “VidéoStudio: New Work from France” is exhibited at The Studio Museum in Harlem, 144 West 125th Street, until June 27.

TUES MAY 18, 7PM • FREE

READING: *THE FAILURE*. Author James Greer reads from *The Failure* with performers and authors Maggie Estep and Joseph Mattson.

FRI MAY 21, 7PM • \$5 SUGG

U.S. SOCIAL FORUM: ORGANIZING REGIONAL POWER. Local activists are invited to join part 3 of a 5-part series building towards the U.S. Social Forum in Detroit this June.

SUN MAY 23, 7PM • \$5 SUGG

PRESENTATION: WINGS & DREAMS. Join Bettina Schmitz and Maria-Anna Foochs for a dialog on the new thinking around old challenges found in *Wings & Dreams: 4 Elements of a New Feminism*, an English-German collection of essays.

FRI JUNE 4, 7PM • FREE

PRESENTATION: *UNDERSTANDING THE CRASH*. Join Seth Tobocman, Eric Laursen and Jess Werhle for a multi-media presentation of comics from *Understanding the Crash*, a book that explains how we got into this financial crisis and brings the conversation back to the people most effected by it. Music by Zef Noise, Eric Blitz and Andy Laties.

SUN JUNE 7, 7PM • FREE

READING: *LAST WORDS OF THE EXECUTED*. Robert K. Elder reads from his book *Last Words of the Executed*, which presents an oral history of American capital punishment, as heard from the gallows, the chair and the gurney.

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too, much like Deborah Grant's collages, in which yellowed newspapers and Basquiat scribbles float on panels of juicy Stalinist red: it draws your eye but leaves the gaze with a certain inertia.

Meanwhile, the collective Otobenga Jones & Associates have created an education-activity kit that will be distributed in public schools. The kit pointedly calls attention to the history of the Black Panther Party: a group that has been smeared in the popular imagination as a cabal of hot-blooded,

ALL THE WORLD'S A COLLAGE IN bobrauschenbergamerica

bobrauschenbergamerica
BY CHARLES L. MEE
DIRECTED BY ANNE BOGART

If you're wondering just how to take in *bobrauschenbergamerica*, you might heed the words of Phil the Trucker, one of the play's characters: "Everywhere I go, there's something to see. I don't know how I got so lucky. But here I am." Showcasing Charles L. Mee's kaleidoscopic inspiration of cultural references — and performed

sion, like Mee's, was most famously expressed in the "making-it-up-as-you-go" technique of collage. Rauschenberg brought collage into three dimensions, juxtaposing everyday objects like pieces of luggage with more bizarre elements, such as taxidermied animals, to uncanny effect. *Bobrauschenbergamerica* is a collage of a play, a mosaic of the human experience: a character's vision of a movie is followed by a line dance, which is in turn followed by a monologue about love.

Directed by Anne Bogart, SITI

a method of working with and thinking about theater that encourages players to focus on immanent, but often neglected, theatrical elements such as spatial relationships, tempo and duration in speech and movement. This isn't what is typically considered "acting technique;" rather, it is a tool for exploring a performative text. We can detect the Viewpoints influence in Bogart's *bobrauschenbergamerica* when Allen, played by Will Bond, is describing the sky and weather. Each time he mentions the heavens, he gestures to the sky with a wave of his arm; and each time, another character walks on stage and waves at him in unison. The movement turns a somewhat abstract monologue into a concrete, almost textured mode of communication, like smoke signals, that reveals a certain understanding amongst the ensemble of characters and in which the audience, the witness to that understanding, participates.

So what can you take away from a play like this, one with hints of story and no clearly discernible moral, a play whose characters delight in spontaneous changes of motivation, one without an apparent climax (let alone end)? You make it up as you go, and you take away whatever you want to — or whatever you just can't shake. That's where America figures into *bobrauschenbergamerica* — aside from the more obvious gestures like a giant American flag set, that is: It's a play about the question of freedom, the freedom inherent in the act of questioning, and the ability to take the aspects that ring true, laugh at the ones that ring false, in the creative quest to reinvent the human experience over and over again.

—ROSALIND GRUSH

SITI Company's production of bobrauschenbergamerica is presented as part of Dance Theater Workshop's Guest Artist Series, a subsidized, curated rental program serving a wide range of dance and performance artists from around the world. The play runs through May 16, with post-performance talks on selected dates. Visit dancetheaterworkshop.org for details.



PHOTO: MICHAEL BROSILOW

by SITI Company, its original interpreters (Mee is a company member) — *bobrauschenbergamerica* is a stunning tableau of dance, comedy, memory, feeling and storytelling. Mee has described the play as a vast, collaged landscape that captures "the sheer exhilaration of living in a country where people make up their lives as they go." It's an approach that both Mee and the play's namesake, postmodernist artist Robert Rauschenberg, knew intimately. But what can, or should, an audience make of an experimental theater piece like *bobrauschenbergamerica*?

I saw the show with a friend who asked me before it started, "Will I be missing something if I don't know a lot about Bob Rauschenberg?" Curtain up, it soon becomes clear that Rauschenberg informs the play from an oblique angle, casting the form, rather than the direct content, of the play in his image. Rauschenberg's vi-

Company's production at Dance Theater Workshop delicately teases out the narrative threads in this collage, particularly in some of the romantic relationships that emerge. Mee gives the characters of two different relationships the same lines, imbuing identical sentences with essentially different meanings that shift the mood of the scenes like a change in lighting. Other productions have used these words to suspend relationships in ambiguity; under Bogart's direction, they hint at resolution. Yet this unusual character development is just as important to the play as a whole as are the delightful, seemingly non-sequitur moments that change nothing, such as a man in a chicken suit crossing the stage, or Phil the Trucker, played by a charming Leon Ingulsrud, telling jokes.

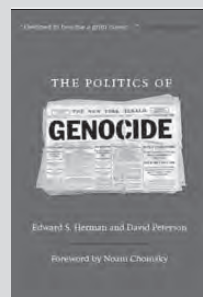
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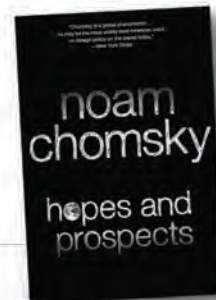
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